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Brooks, Douglas Renfrew

THE SRIVIDYA SCHOOL OF SAKTA TANTRISM: A STUDY OF THE TEXTS AND CONTEXTS OF THE LIVING TRADITIONS IN SOUTH INDIA

Harvard University Ph.D. 1987

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The Śrīvidyā School of Śākta Tantrism: A Study of the Texts and Contexts of the Living Traditions in South India

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The Śrīvidyā School of Śākta Tantrism:
A Study of the Texts and Contexts of the Living Traditions in South India

A thesis presented

by

Douglas Renfrew Brooks

to

The Committee on the Study of Religion

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation offers an historical and theological study of one of the major sects of Hindu Śākta Tantrism. The Śrīvidyā school has flourished in India since at least the seventh century, C. E. and presents one of the most elaborate forms of the esoteric worship of the goddess in a beneficent aspect in Hindu tradition.

This study proceeds from the assumption that Hindu Tantrism is best understood as a sectarian regional phenomenon reflecting pan-Indian values and concepts, an assumption reflecting Tantrics' own understandings. It further accepts that any historical, theological or textual study must also include interpretive input from the living oral traditions since Tantrics have deliberately obscured materials in order to limit access to initiated followers.

The study focuses on the Śrīvidyā school in south India, and in Tamil Nāḍu in particular. Part One traces the historical development of the school from the earliest available sources in Sanskrit and Tamil, including references to its specific mantra (sound identified with the deity) and yantra (geometric form of the deity) by the sixth century Tamil saint Tirumūlar. The theologgical understanding of the goddess in her beneficent anthropomorphic forms as Lalitā Tripurasundarī, the mantra

known as the *śrīvidyā* and the complex configuration known as the *śrīcakra* are treated exhaustively.

Part Two examines the historical and theological material as it is interpreted and practiced by contemporary Srividya adepts in Tamil Nāḍu. It includes case studies of five specific lineages and of a number of individual adepts: its primary focus is Śrīvidyā's practice and interpretation in both private and public settings, including its presence in several major Śaiva temples.

Issues such as the role of authority and ritual symbolism and the concept of scripture are raised in the course of both Parts One and Two.

An Appendix includes a translation of the *Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya* of Bhāskararāya with critical notes, annotations and emendations that correct previous editions of the text. This small but important source presents a summary of many of the central issues within Śrīvidyā tradition and continues to play a role in contemporary forms of faith.

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To My
Teacher and Parents

Wesenheiten werden in der Gegenwart gelebt,
Gegenständlichkeiten in der Vergangenheit.

---Martin Buber, Ich und Du

Abbreviations

I. Sanskrit and Tamil Sources

BY	Brahma Yāmala
JT	Jñānārṇava Tantra
KKV	Kāmakalāvilāsa
KT	Kulārṇava Tantra
LAC	Lalitārcancacandrikā
LSN	Lalitāsahasranāma
LTS	Lalitātrīśatī
LTSB	Lalitātriśatibhāṣya
MBh	Mahābhārata
MAM	Mahārthamañjarī
NS	Nityotsava
NSA	Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇava
PKS	Paraśurāmakalpasūtra
PS	Prapañcasāra
RV	Ṛg Veda
RY	Rudra Yāmala
SL	Saundaryalaharī
SRA	Ṣaubhāgyaratnākāra
SST	Ṣaktisaṃgamatantra
ST	Śāradātilaka
SVA	Srīvidyārṇava Tantra
TA	Tantrāloka
TR	Tripurārahasya
TTU	Tripurātāpinī Upaniṣad
TRT	Tantrarāja Tantra
VT	Vāmakeśvara Tantra
VVR	Varivasyarahasya
YH	Yoginīhṛdaya
YT	Yoginī Tantra

II. Other Abbreviations

ABORI	Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute
ALS	Adyar Library Series
ASS/AnS	Ānandāśrama Sanskrit Series, Poona
BEFEO	Bulletin de l'Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient, Paris
CHI	Cultural History of India
CSS	Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series
Gonda	"The Indian Mantra" by Jan Gonda
GOS	Gaekwad Oriental Series
HT	Hindu Tantrism, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1979 (Handbuch der Orientalistik)

HTSL	Hindu Tantric and Śākta Literature, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrossowitz, 1981 (A History of Indian Lit., II-2)
IHQ	Indian Historical Quarterly
IIJ	Indo-Iranian Journal
JA	Journal Asiatique
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society
KSS	Kāśi Sanskrit Series
KSTS	Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies, Śrīnagar
Ms(s).	Manuscript(s)
NCC	New Catalogus Catalogorum
Padoux	Recherches sur la symbolique et l'énergie...by A. Padoux
Pandey	Abhinavagupta: An Historical and Philosophical Study by K.C. Pandey
PEW	Philosophy East and West, Honolulu
PWSBT	Prince of Wales Saraswati Bhavan Texts, Varanasi
RASB	Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal
Rastogi	Krama Tantricism of Kashmir by N. Rastogi
SBG	Saraswati Bhavan Granthamala
Skt	Sanskrit
WZKS	Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd und Ostäsiens, Wien
ZDMG	Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesallschaft, Leipzig, Wiesbaden
ZMR	Zeitschrift fur Missionwissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft, Munster, Westfalen

N.B. Works of authors receive full citation in the Bibliography.

Introduction

A. Introductory Remarks

There is perhaps no subject in Indian religious studies more maligned or neglected than Hindu Tantrism. Western and Indian scholars have rarely displayed the sympathy or disinterested curiosity for Tantric materials they have for other forms of Indian faith.[1]

Tantrism's penchant for erotic symbolism and challenges to conventional mores make for emotional and sometimes vitriolic discussions among historical and contemporary proponents and detractors. In south Indian vernacular languages, for example, the very word "tantra" conjures images of moral depravity and destructive magic.[2]

The central concern of this study is a Tantric sect that for centuries has debated internally controversial theological interpretations and practices. The sect is known popularly as Śrīvidyā, literally "Auspicious Wisdom" or the "Wisdom of [the Goddess] Śrī", and is one of the major schools within Hindu Śākta Tantrism.[3] The principal concern of this study is to present Śrīvidyā's theology and practice by considering literary and oral sources, historical developments and the living traditions in contemporary south India. Śrīvidyā is not only one of the clearest systematic forms of Śākta Tantrism but deeply

influences non-Tantric Hinduism, especially through its distinctive ritual elements and the legacy of its leading historical proponents.

The study naturally divides into three aspects: (1) historical and theological studies, (2) living and practical interpretations and (3) primary textual sources. Part One considers Śrīvidyā's historical and theological definitions and emphasizes materials which have had a particular impact upon contemporary oral and living traditions in south India; Part Two examines living south Indian Śrīvidyā, especially in Tamil Nāḍu among high-caste proponents, and focuses on the interpretation of historical and theological sources in practice. A broad theological definition of Hindu Tantrism is refined through the emerging picture of Śrīvidyā's historical development and contemporary interpretation. The textual component of the present study includes extensive references to the tradition's Sanskrit sources and the translation of one such source with the commentary of an influential historical proponent (included as an Appendix).

This presentation differs from earlier efforts by focusing on a particular sect within a specific regional context. Tantric tradition itself has created regional, sub-traditions within larger established Śākta sects such as Śrīvidyā. The present effort begins with this premise.[4] A regional emphasis sufficiently narrows the scope of the

study and allows more detailed consideration of actual practice. It also provides a strong basis for cross-regional comparison, an aspect of Tantric studies often mentioned but rarely undertaken.

Like all esoteric forms of Hindu faith, Śrīvidyā's historical and textual developments are fully appreciated only in light of oral and living traditions. As with other Tantric sects, Śrīvidyā's theology and ritual is presented in highly technical and sometimes purposefully obscure language. Without access to living interpretations an understanding of the tradition's practices would remain, at best, only partial. While one must not accept the interpretations of its contemporary adepts uncritically, one cannot hope to understand its practiced faith without taking seriously what these living proponents say and do.[5]

A regional approach to a particular Tantric sect would itself be enough to set apart the present effort from other recent scholarship. Methodologically, the fundamental stance is that of the historian of religion employing techniques familiar to history, philology, theology and social anthropology; these are used to create a basis for understanding religion in a comparative perspective. The present study's primary subjects for comparison are other Śākta Tantric schools and Hindu sects and the overarching concern is the influence of Śrīvidyā on the larger community

of faith. I have not ventured far from these incipient points of comparison since even this limited area remains relatively unexplored.[6] In addition, several major themes in the history of religions are explored including the roles of myth, ritual and philosophy and their relationship to the salvific process.

The study is scientific in orientation inasmuch as it claims to present facts and interpretations without emotional or cultural prejudice; it relies on original sources, first-hand observations and a scrutiny of available scholarship. It is not merely a descriptive presentation of the sect's history, beliefs and practices but rather an investigation of faith. This investigation centers on concepts and values directly involving the human beings for whom they provide religious meaning.[7] Thus, the enquiry's intent is to extend beyond historical and abstract theoretical sources and into the lives of contemporary practitioners reflecting and embodying Śrīvidyā tradition.

In Hindu Tantrism the study of living traditions is especially relevant not only because it is rarely attempted but because historical and literary studies present so few clues for understanding actual forms of practice.[8] While the conclusions reached regarding scriptural interpretation and ritual practices may not extend far beyond the parameters of Tantric studies, the ways in which Śrīvidyā

adepts integrate the sect's ideas and practices into the mainstreams of Hindu life provides a deeper understanding of Indian religion.

For all Tantrics the situation in recent times has changed radically. Textual sources once privately and secretly circulated among initiates are now openly available in libraries or in printed editions. This new situation has not gone unnoticed by traditionalists who both welcome and lament the changes.[9] Literary studies of Tantric sources begun in the nineteenth century have progressed little since then in comparison to other fields in Indian religious studies.[10] Recent efforts have only begun to redress the deficiencies of past scholarly neglect and only a few have brought living Tantrism under serious, systematic scrutiny.[11]

B. Recent Scholarship in Hindu Tantrism, the Present Study and Developing Methodologies

Editions of Tantric sources in Sanskrit as well as textual studies in Indian and European languages are now becoming increasingly available. Several are worthy of commendation for their assiduous editing and clear presentation.[12] This movement towards greater sophistication in Tantric scholarship is abundantly clear in the study of Buddhist traditions, especially in Tibetan

forms, though regrettably less true of Hindu Tantrism in any of its sectarian manifestations.[13] The vast majority of Sanskrit sources remain either in manuscript or without careful editing.[14]

The most significant recent scholarly contributions in Hindu Tantrism have been made by Teun Goudriaan, Sanjukta Gupta and Dirk Jan Hoens, working separately and in collaboration.[15] The value of their efforts cannot be underestimated but neither should their opinions be deemed conclusive, as they themselves readily acknowledge.[16] Without the luxury of fastidious scholarship preceding them their work is groundbreaking for its summary of the general scope of Tantric practices and literature. In addition, they have provided useful working definitions of Tantrism by considering its literary, historical and theological dimensions.[17]

Yet the work of these three scholars is not without limitations and liabilities, not all of which are fully under their control. The most important of these limiting factors is that oral traditions, recognized as inexorable to a mature understanding of Tantric tradition, are left for future study. The scope of study is limited almost entirely to written historical sources, few of which are properly edited or easily available in print.[18] Goudriaan aptly summarizes the situation when he says:

> ...if one takes the emphasis on oral instruction into account...modern scientifically oriented studies on Tantrism exclusively based on written literature are liable to appear incomplete and full of misunderstandings to an initiated Tantric adept.[19]

And,

> Last but not least, are the oral explanations by living Tantric gurus (or modern accounts based upon these). Although they are in the first place of importance for our knowledge of the development of Tantric doctrine and practice in the recent period, they may also incidently provide the investigator with important clues for the interpretations of the early written sources.[20]

A deliberate focus on Sanskrit literary sources has excluded oral traditions from serious consideration. Sanjukta Gupta, co-author of Hindu Tantrism, has had contact with Tantrics in Vārāṇasi but she too restricts the role of oral explanation in order to emphasize literary materials. This appears to be a calculated effort to de-localize Tantric traditions in order to develop a pan-Indian and generic understanding of Tantric ritual.[21] Gupta's accurate and critical assessment of literary traditions has produced a solid theoretical basis for the study of the oral Tantric tradition. The significance of regional forms in the development of Tantric practice and interpretation, however, appears to go unnoticed.

Gupta's descriptions suggest only general patterns of

Tantric belief and practice. The situation is comparable to saying that Christian traditions prescribe a ritual called the Eucharist based upon Gospel descriptions but then offering no further historical consideration of the practice and its interpretations. The Eucharist described in the Gospels may, for example, be conceived as providing an outline for a ritual later systematized and interpreted variously and may provide an archetype for its later reenactments. The Gospels themselves, however, say nothing about the ways in which Christians practice or interpret the Eucharist theologically through history. Such is the case with many Tantric rituals and theological concepts outlined in primary Tantric sources and commentaries. It is only in the living and oral traditions and through critical historical study that a more complete picture of practice and interpretation emerges.

Another neglected aspect in recent scholarship is the consideration of regionalism in historical and theological developments. In order to develop a comprehensive definition and general outline of the whole of Hindu Tantric tradition, scholars have attenuated local and regional factors in their consideration of the composition and interpretation of texts and ritual practices. General theoretical prescriptions for ritual practice are often mistakenly understood to be actual forms of liturgy for

particular Tantric sects and lineages. Members of the same tradition (sampradāya) and even those belonging to the same lines of teachers (parampara) may, in fact, follow radically different practices and norms of conduct depending upon regional custom (deśācāra) and individual instruction. This does not mean that textual studies limited by subject, theme or particular sect do not yield valuable insights into the broader spectrum of Tantric beliefs, but that the resulting picture is undoubtedly out of focus unless viewed in specific historical and regional settings and in light of oral traditions.

By bringing only selective materials to bear, scholars come to unwarranted conclusions concerning the whole Tantric tradition. Not only must the scholar draw upon a wide selection of sectarian sources in a regional setting to draw definitive conclusions but he must weigh these sources proportionately. Certain texts have left marks on the pan-Indian Tantric tradition while others are strictly limited to sectarian or regional sectarian formulations.

In addition, so much attention has been paid to the antinomian elements of Tantric practice and theology that its deliberate efforts to adapt concepts within the mainstreams of Indian thought are often overlooked or distorted. Rather than a consideration of how Tantrics locate themselves in the center of Indian religious history,

the scholarly emphasis falls on Tantrics as peripheral. More careful scrutiny of the historical situation reveals the majority of sects were not merely rejecting conventional norms of conduct but seeking to balance themselves in relationship to established traditions. Śrīvidyā in south India is one of the most overt examples of a Tantric sect incorporating itself into Hindu orthodoxy and yet retaining a professed unconventionality.

Tantric literary sources, designed as practical guides to ritual according to specific lineage traditions, have rarely (if ever) been followed to the letter: the fluidity of Tantric practice demands that the guru design the spiritual discipline (sādhana) according to the particular needs of the student. Gurus are naturally guided by their own experiences and oral traditions, by the scriptures interpreted within their sect and by regional factors including local customs and mythology.

Studies such as those of Goudriaan and Gupta group together literary sources without attention to sectarian, regional and oral interpretations. These provide, at best, outlines of practice and ideology rather than prescriptions for spiritual discipline (sādhana) or ritual practice. Living Tantrics may accept or reject sources included in a generic description of their sect depending upon their own theological and regional agendas. To say that a particular

lineage of Tantrics "follows" a particular source or group of sources does not mean that the liturgies or specific doctrines contained in them are followed to the letter, or even that they are necessarily a part of the "practical" tradition. From region to region and from group to group the same sources can be so variously interpreted as to suggest only a shadow of the stated prescriptions.[22] Within a single sect, such as Śrīvidyā, particular sources are accepted by some lineages and rejected by others while particular sources have gained regional importance. When Gupta describes Tantric ritual, for example, she draws upon nearly every relevant textual source thematically related to Śāktism. She does not consider, however, the possibility that this type of literary analysis generates an "ideal" that has never had any direct historical parallel.[23]

A regional approach concentrating on specific lineages within a particular sect is one possible solution for overcoming the misunderstanding that arises from assuming a cumulative historical impact of literary works taken across sectarian Tantric traditions. When combined with the study of living oral traditions, such a regional consideration of historical textual sources broadens our understanding of the whole tradition by eliminating speculative generalizations emerging on purely literary grounds.

Limiting the discussion to a Śākta Tantric sect further

narrows the subject by focusing on certain common theological presuppositions and eliminates the need to make complex Hindu sectarian distinctions. This is not to suggest that it is vain to speak of the Tantric tradition in its catholicity. One must, however, go beyond broad literary study and focus instead on identifiable sects and specific sources, including living practices and oral interpretations. A specific case study contributes to an understanding of the larger picture by effectively controlling, if not entirely eliminating, the distorting effects of idealizing Tantrism as a conceptually abstract entity viewed apart from its historical forms. It also focuses instead on Tantric practitioners and interpreters rather than on the tenuous concept of "Tantrism". The focus of discussion is thus centered on the faith of individuals and groups rather than on an abstract concept lacking historical contexts.

C. Regional Scope of the Project

The setting for this study is contemporary south India and, particularly, Tamil Nāḍu. Though much is made of the southern regional factors that shape Śrīvidyā's practice, the core of ideas and values are indeed shared across geographical lines. Regional views, however, are distinguished throughout from generic concepts and

practices. Certainly Śrīvidyā's importance among the Śākta Tantric schools is measured to a large extent by its historical and textual continuity and influence across India's regional boundaries. At the same time regional influences have shaped it in ways that should not be overlooked or underestimated.

The initial task is to identify Śrīvidyā's historical figures and literary sources with pan-Indian significance and to consider their interpretations in the regional setting of south India. This will set the stage for the study of contemporary oral and living Śrīvidyā tradition.

There is presently no systematic scholarly work available considering a major Hindu Tantric sect with pan-Indian popularity that evaluates its theology, history, and the oral components of contemporary interpretation. The task is complicated further by the inaccessibility of outsiders to secret traditions. Historically, Tantrics have gone to great lengths to preserve the secrecy of their traditions but as one adept observed:

> The time has come to make information about our traditions more available. This does not mean opening the doors to anyone who wishes to practice. That is different. It is time to dispel the misconceptions about our practices.
>
> Our books are now publicly available, we must respond or else be further misunderstood. Our secrets will not be violated by telling the truth about ourselves.[24]

These changing attitudes indicate that the time is ripe

for scholars to begin reevaluating Tantric materials and to begin searching for new sources of information.

D. The Definition of Tantrism and its Historical Significance in the History of Indian Religions

Before proceeding with an analysis of Śrīvidyā and an outline of the present study's methodology, it is necessary to clarify the general features that define and characterize "Tantric" Indian religious traditions and to establish why the Śrīvidyā sect offers fertile ground for this type of study. Defining Tantrism's characteristics could obviously consume an entire thesis; it is a matter that has not yet been satisfactorily resolved despite having received considerable scholarly attention. I shall review here only those points relevant to the present investigation. A general familiarity with Tantrism's basic structure of beliefs and practices has been assumed; these are matters considered so fundamental that they unquestionably cut across all sectarian distinctions.[25] The present study restricts itself to Hindu Tantrism not because, as one scholar has put it, the similarities between Hindu and Buddhist forms are "wholly accidental", but because their interrelations are complex and the subject tangential to this investigation.[26]

Generalizations about Tantrism in the present study refer primarily (but not exclusively) to Śāktas, the Goddess-centered Hindu traditions, unless otherwise noted. Śrīvidyā is a distinctive form of Śāktism and a school of Tantrism; the basic difference between Tantrism and Śāktism is this study's most fundamental point of departure. Teun Goudriaan has aptly set it forth:

> Applying the wider sense, one can say that Tantrism or Tantric elements are found---in differing grades of frequency and intensity---in Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, Śāktism, Jainism and Buddhism; but no one will probably deny the prevalent position of Śāktism within the Hindu Tantric fold...
>
> The essential role of Śāktism in the Tantric tradition is emphasized by various authors. Tantrism and the Śakti cult are even identified outright. But it seems best to consider, with Payne (Śāktas, p.72) Śāktism and Tantrism as "two intersecting but not coinciding circles". On account of its "inclusive" nature, Tantrism is much more diffused. Śāktism is defined in different ways...Sometimes it is incorrectly identified with "the cult of female deities in general"...It can be shortly characterized as the worship of Śakti...i.e., the universal and all-embracing dynamis which manifests itself in human experience as a female divinity. To this should be added that inseparably connected with her is an inactive male partner as whose power of action and movement the Śakti functions...It is therefore not enough to say that a Śākta worships the female as ultimate principle; nor is it correct categorically to state that Śāktism is characterized by the use of the five makāras... Like "Tantrism", "Śāktism" is sometimes also used in a wider meaning. It makes sense to distinguish an "independent" from a "dependent" variety... In the latter case, the Śakti(s) is (are) worshipped within the fold of another denomination (like Vaiṣṇavism or Jainism) without constituting the essence of its creed and practice, while in the Śākta sect proper the Śakti is the chief divinity.

> Although Śāktism is often defined also by means of typical ritual practices, it is advisable to restrict the use of this term for a world view oriented towards Śakti, while Tantrism should be applied to a conglomerate of ritual and yogic practices and presuppositions.[27]

In the theological sense, Tantrism entails sādhana or spiritual discipline defined as a systematic quest for worldly prosperity, empowerment and final liberation by esoteric means. These esoteric means include the recitation of mantras, the use of gestures (mudrās), the identification of sounds and deities with the body (nyāsa) and the application of these and other elements (such as yoga and philosophical enquiry) in practical forms of contemplative worship (pūjā or upāsana).[28] The most important feature of Tantric discipline is the deliberate effort to enact and embody theological symbols and concepts, the most central of which is the unity of bipolar opposites expressed in sexual terms. Tantrism is fundamentally "esoteric" in the sense that the secrecy of teachings and the necessity of private initiation are emphasized as defining features of its traditional transmission. Tantric theories and practices require special instruction into forms of mental, verbal and bodily discipline which, in turn, depend upon secrecy and proper initiation for their maintenance.

Obviously, the most accurate historical definition of an individual or group as Tantric is self designation.

Those directly inheriting the legacy of Tantric faith and belief provide historical and living paradigms of its theoretical and practical definition.[29] Śrīvidyā's historical proponents clearly acknowledge their tradition to be Tantric and the reticence expressed by a handful of contemporary adepts to accept this designation arises from the term's colloquial association with moral lassitude or "black" magic.

The scholar laboring to identify the unique characteristics of Tantric faith will find precious few not in evidence elsewhere in Vedism, classical Hinduism or in other non-Tantric Indian religious traditions.[30] Historically as well as theologically, Tantrism is best understood not for its unique contributions to Indian religion but as a synthesis of established concepts and beliefs cast into particular forms.

In addition to self-designation a particular tradition is Tantric by being a locus of those characteristics that collectively describe its generic features. Thus, it is perhaps more appropriate to use "Tantric" as an adjective describing individuals or groups displaying a synthesis of generic characteristics rather than as a noun suggesting a single or fixed set of organizational principles. Śrīvidyā is exemplary of the synthetic structure of concepts and practices; it shares the basic elements of Tantrism and

Śākta theology and yet creates an individual identity by drawing together distinctive symbolic components following commonly shared patterns. Its ritual use of mantras and yantras, for example, is common to all Śākta Tantrics while the particular forms these elements take give it its unique definition within the sectarian tradition.

Goudriaan has developed a list of descriptive and theoretical criteria that serve as a general description of Hindu Tantrism. But these do not apply in every case, as the present study demonstrates conclusively, and can only serve to outline Tantrism's major components in the generic sense.[31]

The principal features of Tantrism not evident from the theological definition already given and shared across sectarian lines can be summarized in the following points:

1. Tantric texts are extra-Vedic as authoritative religious sources. They often claim to supercede Vedic and conventional sources as the most appropriate means to salvation in the degenerate Kālī yūga by proffering alternative forms of Vedic practice and ritual. More frequently they are considered additional aids for leading a disciplined religious life rather than as sublating Vedic prescriptions.

2. Tantrism teaches special forms of yoga and spiritual discipline including the quasi-physiological kuṇḍalinī yoga.[32] This involves an identification of certain centers of activity with sounds and deities invoked from within the body.

3. Tantric deities are principally identified as being within the body and as aspects of the individual's personality. Unlike other Hindu concepts of the invocation of divinity, Tantric identifications bring macrocosmic beings into the bodily and mentally constructed microcosm.

4. Tantrism involves elaborate speculations on the nature of sound, especially in texts specifying mantras and forms of practice designated spiritual discipline (*sādhana*). Creation in its material manifestations is paralleled in sounds that are meta-linguistic formations reflecting the original state of ontological unity. The Brahman of Upaniṣadic speculations in its most subtle, pre-articulated form is itself viewed as a derivative of sound. To hold the key to these sound formulations is to be empowered with the ability to manipulate nature, affect social and spiritual events and ultimately, guide the course of individual salvation (both one's own *and* others).

5. Tantrics, like other Hindus, place an extraordinary value on the authority of the teacher (*guru*). In Tantrism the guru's authority may supercede any scriptural or traditional source. The links to the guru are solidified by the necessity of initiation (*dīksā*). The guru's direct guidance defines the path and practices of the particular lineage (*parampara*).

6. Tantric spirituality places a strong emphasis on ritual and meditative practices involving bi-polar symbology often put in contrasting sexual terms of male and female, or theologically speaking, in the figures of the gods Siva and Sakti. In this process the female manifestations take on a special significance not seen in Vedism.

7. Ritual practices in Tantric traditions are viewed as internal and external forms of sacrifice (i.e., *antar-* and *bahiryāgas*). This involves microcosm/macrocosm symbolism and other esoteric activities designed as transformative means for spiritual advancement. The internalization of deities, ritual acts and speculative symbols is one of the features of Tantric traditions in evidence in certain mystical sources of Hindu theology such as the early Upaniṣads.

8. Secrecy is a religious value linked to initiation (*dīksā*) and the conservation of power within the tradition religiously and socially. It is also conceptually linked to claims of an expeditious accomplishment of worldly and spiritual aims. Tantra is secret and dangerous because it is a "lightening bolt path", as Buddhists called it, not easily controlled or mastered. It offers a "short cut" to this goal from the long and arduous path to liberation. This is a subject given more careful scrutiny in the study of living traditions in Part Two.

9. Tantrics use substances in ritual and engage in practices disapproved of in the conventional sources of Hindu Dharma. These include the five m's or makāras, so-called because each of the Sanskrit terms begins with °m': wine (madya), fish (matsya), meat (māṃsa), fermented grain (mudrā) and sexual union (maithuna). The value and appropriateness of the makāras is debated among Tantrics and is the focus of much discussion within Śrīvidyā. The place of these and other socially antinomian forms of conduct in the spiritual path are given careful attention in the study of the living Śrīvidyā traditions of south India. While characteristically Tantric these activities are by no means universally accepted or approved. They do, however, in a sense encapsulate the Tantric quality of collapsing conventional and ultimate perspectives and goals: by using ordinary things and engaging in behavior defying the codes of high-caste Hindus, Tantrics attempt to break through the structures of convention and discover ultimate reality as immanent in the physical and everyday world. The emphasis is not only on identifying ontologically with the macrocosmic reality of Brahman as entirely immanent in the physical and spiritual body but in realizing Brahman's blissful nature (ānanda) as having both physical and spiritual effects.

10. Tantric initiation is based on schemes of qualification (adhikāra) in which caste and sex are not the primary criteria for acceptability. This is not to say that these components are disregarded. Rather Tantric qualification depends more upon physical and mental dispositions such as personal self-discipline and a clear resolve to undertake the rigors of the spiritual disciplines of daily practice. The flavor of Tantric sources is not anti-caste but emphasize a non-caste based hierarchy of spiritual qualification.[33]

These are not, of course, the only characteristics of Tantric traditions.[34] They do, however, cut across sectarian lines and outline the general criteria applied in the present case study.

It is with these defining criteria in mind that scholars assert Śākta Tantrism to be Hindu Tantrism par excellence.[35] Śakti, though not without her consort (in

Śrīvidyā, an essentially benign Śiva to complement the benign Śakti) is the focus of spiritual practice and centerpiece of speculation. Though it is clear that all Śāktas are not Tantrics the majority of sources bearing the title "Tantra" take the sectarian position of Śāktism. The Tantras focus on the Goddess as the Supreme Principle of the Universe in its active, creative and theologically responsive manifestation. Śāktism, however, is so closely related to Śaiva traditions that it is not unusual to find Śāktas referring to themselves Śaivas; in certain theological and practical ways the differences between Śaivas and Śāktas are more frequently matters of emphasis rather than of kind. One contemporary Śrīvidyā adept offered this explanation:

> Smārta Brahmins in south India, like ourselves, for example, are basically Śaivas though some of us worship Śakti as our family (kula-) or chosen (iṣṭadevatā) deity. In this sense our branch of Śaivism is Śāktism; we see Devī as inseparable from Śiva and Śiva as the root of the tree. In Śrīvidyā Śakti encompasses the Siva principle. This is clearly different from, say, the Saiva Siddhāntins for whom Śiva is the focus of worship.[36]

Śāktas, however, are not the preeminent Tantrics because they were necessarily the first to develop or systematize Tantric beliefs and practices.[37] The origins of Tantrism in India are as recondite as those of Goddess worship and it is simply impossible to determine

conclusively which Tantric group or regional manifestation is responsible for developing specific elements.[38] Śrīvidyā, while clearly a Śakti-centered sect, is deeply influenced by Kashmiri Śaivism especially with regard to the theoretical aspects of cosmology. Without ever acknowledging openly any commonality, Śrīvidyā assumes the essential structure of Kashmiri Śaiva cosmology but instead considers Śakti as the central figure. There is simply not enough evidence presently available to evaluate who is "borrowing" from whom. A more plausible and likely situation is that Śāktas and Śaivas shared ideas and applied them to suit their own distinctive theological focus.

Śākta Tantrics are exemplary of Tantrism in general by their commitment to its synthetic structure, elaboration and systematization of patterns of belief and practice. While all Tantric sects, for example, employ bipolar and sexual symbolism to embody ritually the Upaniṣadic notions of Ātman and Brahman, only Śāktas take the metaphysical position to the conclusion of absolute non-dualism.[39] Śaiva Āgamas and Vaiṣṇava Pāñcarātra traditions remain committed to varying degrees of theological dualism in which the individual's relationship to the divine is subordinate even at the final level of spiritual realization. Hence divine grace and intervention play a more prominent role in defining the liberative process for non-Śākta oriented Tantrics. Āgamic

oriented Śaivas and Vaiṣṇava Pāñcarātrins place less stress than Śāktas on private, individual meditation and ritual enactment. It can also be argued that only Śāktas systematize their esoteric theology by making ritual enactment the key to liberation. Others, in comparison, reflect this process only partially.[40]

If Saktas are the Tantrics _par excellence_ then ŚrĪvidyā may be considered an exemplary sect of Śākta Tantrism. Perhaps no other sectarian group has gone to comparable lengths to organize and elaborate its theology, symbolism and ritual practices. This is evident not only in literary sources but in the continuity of practices and interpretations maintained by contemporary adepts.[41]

Śāktas primarily worshipping the goddess in beneficent (_saumya_) forms other than ŚrĪvidyā's Lalitā TripurasundarĪ have less elaborate forms of Tantric spiritual discipline (_sādhana_) especially with regard to rituals integrating an anthropomorphic image, mantra and yantra.[42] Only the worship of the terrifying KālĪ aspect as set forth in the KālĪkula Tantras (and in its Bengali forms especially) reaches comparable levels of systematization. Even in this case, however, the effort to link theoretical and speculative symbolism with ritual practice appears to have been less clearly developed than in ŚrĪvidyā sources.[43] ŚrĪvidyā stands out not only as a coherent body of

theological literature but as a Śākta Tantric tradition codifying and distinguishing its own practices from others and, at the same time, drawing upon common themes.

It will not be an object of this study to prove Śrīvidyā's claims of intellectual preeminence among Śāktas nor to demonstrate that it is "more Tantric" than other sects. The aim, rather, is to examine the key elements of this living Tantric faith and compare them to general literary and historical descriptions of Tantrism. Purely literary study or theological analysis would, in fact, tell us very little about the actual religious lives of Śrīvidyā adepts.

A regional focus on Śrīvidyā's living traditions also provides an opportunity to dispel certain superficial generalizations about Tantrism which have unfortunately evolved into cherished dogmas.[44] One example is the often repeated notion that caste and gender are not significant factors in determining spiritual qualification (adhikāra). These are, in fact, essential features of any Tantric evaluation for discipleship. With the living oral tradition and actual cases in mind it is possible to observe how Śrīvidyā interprets these issues in text, history and practice.

The south Indian setting also affords the opportunity to examine Śrīvidyā tradition as a private Tantric tradition

in more public settings. Śrīvidyā has acquired a unique place in southern Śaiva temples and in the traditions of the maṭhas of the Śaṅkara tradition in Kāñcipuram and Śṛṅgerī; it is one of the few Tantric sects whose distinctive features are directly observable outside the domains of private, initiated Tantric practice. In the Kāmākṣī temple at Kāñcipuram, for example, the śrīcakra, an object of worship specific to Śrīvidyā, is worshipped in public contexts regardless of the initiated status of the devotee. In another case, a major literary work of Śrīvidyā, the Saundaryalaharī attributed to Śaṅkarācārya, has gained enormous popularity among southern Śrīvidyā adepts who instruct non-initiates into its specific ritual uses (prayogas).[45] The full extent of the diffusion of this private, Tantric worship in public forums is a major subject of investigation in Part Two.

Śrīvidyā is not only important as an historical sect of Śākta Tantrism but in recent times has left a significant mark on the larger fabric of Hindu Indian life. Its basic triad of theological and ritual forms has become part of the mainstreams of Hindu faith; its adepts have brought ordinarily restricted, initiated beliefs and practices into popular religious settings. The social and religious conditions under which these elements have accommodated regional contexts and incorporated popular elements of faith

is of primary concern to our study of living tradition.

E. The Scope, Objectives and Methods for the Present Study

The Śrīvidyā tradition will be examined from three interrelated perspectives dividing the study into three parts.

In Part One the initial task is to trace the Śrīvidyā's origins as an historical movement by observing the earliest literary references to its defining features and examining it as part of the larger Kaula Śākta Tantra tradition. A chronological review of the key Śrīvidyā texts and figures that have had an impact on south Indian traditions offers the necessary historical and literary perspective.

Śrīvidyā, as an historical sect, is then also considered in relation to other Śākta Tantric theologies and forms of worship as well as in relation to other non-Tantric movements. Since, for example, Śrīvidyā not only maintains the standard positions of Śākta non-dualism (advaita) but includes the advaita theologian Śaṅkarācārya within its tradition, this matter is given special attention. Secrecy, initiation and the role of the guru, important to Tantrism in general, are examined in the course of the discussion and help distinguish Śrīvidyā's interpretations from other Kaula and Śākta Tantric schools.

Broader thematic issues in the Indian tradition such as the roles of action, knowledge and devotion in the quest for liberation form a central part of the historical analysis. Concepts of caste, attitudes towards women and the inclusion of such controversial ritual components as the so-called five makāras (see the defining characteristics given above) are discussed in both Parts One and Two.

Last but not least in importance are issues concerning the study of religion. These include the roles of scripture and authority, of ritual symbolism and liberation through specific types of action, especially ritual action. Śrīvidyā provides a specific context in which to discuss general principles and methods of interpretation in the history of religions. Also of concern in the present study is the use of feminine imagery of the divine and its role in specific regional and historical contexts.

The basic triad of theological and ritual speculation that collectively defines Śrīvidyā is a topic of detailed discussion in Part One. The investigation begins with the goddess in her familiar beneficent (saumya) anthropomorphic form as she is described in the tradition's major literary sources. References are drawn from a variety of sources but center on the accounts given by Śrīvidyā authors; these include the Śrīkula Tantras, devotional works such as the Lalitāsahasranāma and the sectarian Śākta Upaniṣads

(especially the Tripurā Upaniṣad). The Goddess's nature and attributes as the motherly Śrī, Lakṣmī or Lalitā Tripurasundarī, the names particularly favored in Śrīvidyā sources, are considered for their theological, esoteric and practical ritual significance.

Śrīvidya's preference for the beneficent Lalitā has brought a theological identification of this particular aspect with all similarly beneficent localized forms of the goddess. This process of identification is given specific contexts in the living traditions and within the broader setting of the south Indian Śaiva temple cults.

The goddess Lalitā Tripurasundarī, however, is not worshipped exclusively by Śrīvidyā adepts though it is the particular name and aspect of Śakti at the center of the tradition. Neither is Lalitā the sole deity within Śrīvidyà. Other Hindu gods, goddesses, demigods and saints are revered for their role in the traditional theological complex. These images are also discussed in relation to the figure of Lalitā. Śrīvidyā today, in south India especially, is passed predominantly among smārta Brahmins who also follow their own family traditions and may be involved in other forms of Śaiva sectarian worship. What makes Lalitā Tripurasundarī special in Śrīvidyā is her further identification with mantra and yantra forms, forms that Śrīvidyā alone is responsible for developing.

The second corner of Śrīvidyā's theological triangle is the mantra or sound manifestation identified with Lalitā Tripurasundarī. As in other Tantric schools, mantras play a seminal role in Śrīvidyā's ritual practices and speculations. While Śrīvidyā employs elements of *mantraśāstra* common to all Tantrics its own highly developed forms are among its most important practical and intellectually compelling features. Lalitā's fifteen or sixteen syllable mantra is itself called the *śrīvidyā* and is the source of the tradition's name. It is perhaps Śrīvidyā's most esoteric and least public component but also central and unique to the tradition. Its various configurations remain a guarded secret; historical sources prefer codes or shadowy descriptions to explicit mention. The symbolism and ritual use of the *śrīvidyā* is discussed in detail in Part One as well as its place in the broader Tantric and *mantraśāstra* traditions. Its variant forms according to different sub-sects and the different roles it plays in the soteriological process are considered in light of historical and speculative materials.

The third component of Śrīvidyā's theological triad is the *śrīcakra*, the goddess in her diagrammatical manifestation as a complex configuration of triangles, lines and shapes. The *śrīcakra*'s popularity among contemporary Hindus extends well beyond the parameters of the Śrīvidyā.[46]

Its symbolism and theological significance, along with the śrīvidyā, is the focal point of Śrīvidyā ritual, cosmology and speculation. As a macrocosmic symbol of the universe, the śrīcakra finds its microcosm in human body while its component elements are considered for their specific ritual roles in Śrīvidyā's spiritual discipline and soteriology.

These three essential theological elements form the basis for Śrīvidyā's distinctive patterns of belief and practice. They define it as a school of Śākta Tantrism and as a collection of sub-schools, each with its own interpretations and procedures.

In Part Two historical and theological Śrīvidyā is considered as a living faith in contemporary south India. Oral traditions and individual adept's interpretations are presented as reflections upon historical sources and the changing conditions of the modern situation. The impact of historical and social change and the spread of Śrīvidyā from the nucleus of initiated followers to the larger social setting is also examined. The center of textual investigation shifts from the pan-Indian "classical" Tantras and other comparable sources to the ritual handbooks (paddhatis or nibandhas) of individual lineages that form the core of living tradition practice.

The investigations in Part Two also involve the

living tradition's interpretation of the basic theological triad: the anthropomorphic Lalitā Tripurasundarī is identified with a number of local manifestations of the goddess and as part of certain Śaiva temple traditions; the śrīvidyā mantra is examined as it is practiced among initiates and the śrīcakra considered for its major role in ritual in both private and public settings.

Theological and practical issues raised in Part One as purely textual and historical matters are given a specific living and regional setting in Part Two. For example, the historical relationship of Śaṅkara, the works attributed to him (as claimed by Śāktas) and the teachings embodied in these works are considered in relation to Śaṅkara influenced Śrīvidyā adepts and the Śāṅkara tradition established in Kāñcipuram. Contemporary Śrīvidyā, by and large, accepts as fact the dubious historical relationship of the eighth century Śaṅkara to the tradition.

In the period of my basic research in 1984-85 over thirty distinct lineages of Śrīvidyā adepts were identified and well over one hundred interviews of initiates conducted.[47] The informants reveal their faith as a dynamic and authentic reflection of Śrīvidyā's literary, historical traditions. The cumulative historical impact of texts and traditions on the contemporary lineage's oral traditions is at the center of critical analysis. Adepts' views on caste,

community and religious identity have a practical impact on their interpretations within south Indian cultural context. What people declare as belief or claim to practice is often quite different from how they actually behave; this is investigated as part of the effort to understand Śrīvidyā as a dynamic faith.

Informants represent a wide spectrum of social and religious communities. For the sake of comparison, Śrīvidyā's southern tradition is contrasted briefly with northern manifestations, especially those in Uttar Pradesh and Mahārāṣṭra. The basic research methodology employed was interview, observation and participation. More detailed remarks concerning the methodology of the study and its results are given at the beginning of Part Two.

It is obvious that such a study cannot proceed without a large degree of subjective input. If there is any obvious subjective posturing in the presentation of these fieldwork observations it is that I have assumed a generally positive, but not uncritical, approach to the tradition. I have accepted at face value, as Śrīvidyā's followers do, its commitment to genuine religious ideals. Whether the living tradition succeeds in measuring up to its lofty religious ideals and moral values is a matter for critical appraisal. The results of this approach will, I believe, speak for themselves as will the sincerity of the informants and the

effort to evaluate them justly.

F. A Note on the Circumstances of the Present Study

The specific circumstances under which this study was undertaken deserve a brief description since these factors play a significant part in the methodologies employed to realize it. Scholars trained as professional Indologists and historians of religion have rarely been afforded the opportunity to study Tantric traditions with due consideration to oral sources and living interpretations. This is undoubtedly a major reason why such studies have so rarely been attempted. Tantric practitioners even when trained in the western academic tradition have themselves refrained from coming forth with studies meeting critical standards.[48] Personal involvement in a religious tradition such Hindu Tantrism has often led to a breach of scholarly discretion and disinterested critical analysis.[49]

It would, however, be disingenuous to deny my personal involvement with the subject and the sect. Rather it is due to this direct contact with the tradition that I was able to gain access to the traditions of living adepts. Whether scholarly indiscretion has been committed is left for the reader to decide. However, given the amount of materials collected on contemporary traditions the views of any one lineage might well have been omitted. None of the recorded

[illegible]

responses of Śrīvidyā adepts are my own opinions.

Equally serious is whether I have breached the trust of Tantric tradition and my informants. Information is withheld only to the extent that it implicates individuals in ways that would offend or embarrass them personally. These instances are indeed very rare. No individuals or groups are identified by their actual names. This one condition allowed frank and open discussion. The overwhelming majority of informants responded in the trust that neither personal nor traditional proprieties would be violated and I did not pretend to leave my own faith "at the doorstep". Most adepts were anxious to see more materials for study and practice become available and many were willing to part with traditional secrets if certain misconceptions, viewed as the major cause for the tradition's being morally suspect, might be eliminated. A further discussion of the attitudes of informants and procedures used to gather information is given at the beginning of Part Two.

The majority of materials for the study of living traditions were gathered during 1984 and 1985 while I lived and worked in the home of, Dr. G. Sundarmoorthy, Chairman of the Department of Sanskrit at Madurai-Kamaraj University, Madurai, Tamil Nāḍu. Beginning with only two known informants our immediate task was to extend the network by

gaining the trust and confidence of a large number of Śrīvidyā adepts. In the process we were welcomed into countless homes with a hospitality that is a testimony to the generosity of Indian culture. It was in these essentially private settings that these men and women discussed their personal and religious lives. Whenever possible we availed the opportunity to observe adepts in more open and public circumstances. The details of these meetings and the accounts of the rituals witnessed and texts interpreted for us are a primary subject of Part Two. Only selective cases have been included in this discussion.

Textual studies, including the surveying of manuscripts and the editing, translating and review of major sources continued at the same time we gathered our oral commentaries and observed practices. Living adepts' comments on specific texts and interpretations are included here as well. While the majority of the field work was completed in 1984-85, the entire effort is the cumulative outcome of studies begun originally in 1977-78.

Comparisons between southern and northern practices within Śrīvidyā reflect many of the general north/south distinctions in Indian culture and Hindu faith. It is possible, for example, to demonstrate that a more literal and less socially conservative approach to some Tantric rites is characteristic of northern interpretations. It is

also possible to affirm the general impression that south Indian Hindu culture has bound itself more to the temple cult (especially in post-Islamic south India) and that southern Śrīvidyā adepts have deliberately sought to bring the private cult into forms of temple worship. In contemporary north India there are fewer observable connections between private and public displays and noticeably less effort made on the part of adepts to bring private practices into public (or quasi-public) settings.

The concepts of secrecy and the guru as the locus of spiritual authority are given special attention in the analysis of practices and textual interpretations of the living tradition. The adepts' treatment of books, reverence of scriptures and understanding of history and the instruction of their own teachers contributes to this consideration. In the direction of disciples Tantric gurus, for example, have the authority to sublate virtually any written or oral traditions. This gives them an absolute power to determine what is authoritative on an individual basis. This absolute authority, however, is obviously not exercised in an historical, scriptural or traditional vacuum and Śrīvidyā gurus do not fail to respond to these factors. Attitudes towards scripture and other elements of traditional authority are investigated among living adepts.

G. Concluding Portion of the Project

Part Three, which is designated as Appendix I, offers a translation a major Srividya work, the Tripurā Upaniṣad with the commentary (bhāṣya) of one of its foremost historical figures, the eighteenth century south Indian, Bhāskararāya or Bhāsurānandanātha. This work, never before available in a language other than the original Sanskrit, offers the mature reflections of a key historical proponent and covers a variety of subjects including the symbolism of the śrīcakra, the śrīvidyā mantra, the ritual use of the pañcamakāras and the esoteric and erotic form of worship known as kāmakalādhyāna. The text is entirely Tantric despite bearing the title 'upaniṣad': its sixteen cryptic and encoded verses are epigrams that can be interpreted only by the initiated adept.

In the history of Śākta and Tantric literature the Tripurā Upaniṣad is important but not an indispensible work. It certainly gains prominence after Bhāskararāya and largely because of his interest in it. I have chosen to include it as part of the present study for three reasons: first, it offers a short summary of virtually all the major concepts and values that shape Śākta Tantrism and has for its specific emphasis the Śrīvidyā tradition. With Bhāskararāya's comments it is an illuminating summary of materials covered more technically and in more detail

elsewhere. Second, its wide range of subjects allows one to draw upon materials not found in other works of comparable size or importance within Śrīvidyā. Thus interpretations concerning both theoretical and practical matters come up in the text. Unlike the other Śākta Upaniṣads Bhāskararāya commented upon, Tripurā Upaniṣad is not limited to a single subject as is Bhavanā Upaniṣad nor is it as terse and disjointed as Kaula Upaniṣad. It has the added value of never before having been translated. The third reason for the text's particular relevance to the present study is its continued importance in living traditions, especially in south India.

While Tripurā Upaniṣad is not an introduction to Śrīvidyā, neither is it, when taken with Bhāskararāya's comments, too impenetrable to be appreciated by scholars and non-initiates of the sect. Bhāskararāya does much to unravel the technical and shadowy language of the text but is not always straightforward himself. It is evident that he too is writing for a select audience of philosophically inclined adepts. The present translation makes use of the comments and remarks of contemporary adepts as well as the two other available historical commentaries. This enhances the overall textual interpretation and sometimes clarifies Bhāskararāya's gnomic utterances.[50] An introduction to the text reviews its structure and contents and places it in the

contexts of the historical development of Śrīvidyā.

The text and commentary are especially relevant to the present study when taken in light of contemporary south Indian traditions. Bhāskararāya himself has left a mark on Śrīvidyā traceable to the present; at least three contemporary lineages (parampara) claim his spiritual inheritance. It is possible then to consider how these groups respond to his works and follow his interpretative suggestions. It may also be possible to solve some of the more mysterious aspects of his historical legacy such as the disputes between his disciples and conflicting interpretive claims made in contemporary lineages.

Tripurā Upaniṣad is also relevant to the present work because it plays a prominent role in ritual and contemplative Śrīvidyā in modern times. The text is considered valuable for its mantric qualities quite apart from its semantic meanings. Like few other texts it is recited and appended to such rituals as śrīcakra pūjā, the primary ritual event of Śrīvidyā worship. The significance of the text in its different roles as theoretical source book and ritual component deserves consideration as part of contemporary tradition.

In the notes to the translation the Sanskrit text is emended to correct the readings given in the available Tantrik Texts Series Edition of Śākta Upanisads (see the

Bibliography for details) following a review of five manuscripts gathered from libraries and private collectors in India. While not a critical edition, the corrected text is a first step in bringing this valuable work to the attention of scholars.

1. The history of early scholarship in Tantric studies is discussed by Goudriaan thoroughly in his study of Tantric and Sākta literature (cf.,p.2ff.). Rather than reproduce his work I have chosen instead to limit the discussion of past scholarship and concentrate on theoretical and methodological issues for the present study. Goudriaan's two recent works are without question the most extensive and elaborate general studies on Tantrism available to date. He reviews the history of scholarship as well as the history of Tantric tradition with a careful and critical eye for detail. See Teun Goudriaan and Sanjukta Gupta, *Hindu Tantric and Sākta Literature*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1981 (Vol.II, fasc.2 of *A History of Indian Literature*, edited by Jan Gonda) [abbreviated hereafter as *HTSL*]; and Sanjukta Gupta, Dirk Jan Hoens and Teun Goudriaan, *Hindu Tantrism*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1979 (Handbuch der *Orientalistik*, 4.Band, 2.Abschnitt) [abbreviated hereafter *HT*].

2. The same tone of disapproval is found in north India though I cannot speak as authoritatively on the actual linguistic patterns. In the south, however, especially in Tamil Nāḍu the immediate visceral reaction to the term "tantra" is negative among those with no formal connection to its traditions. Many contemporary adepts of Srīvidyā, for example, refuse to refer to themselves or to their tradition as Tantric because of the suggestion that it is immoral or includes destructive magic. When it is pointed out to them that this doesn't seem to be the case with their historical predecessors they suggest the rather plausible idea that the term has historically undergone a drastic change in suggestive meaning, at least in the public domain.

3. The independence of the Śrīvidyā school has been discussed by Goudriaan and acknowledged by a number of other modern scholars including Bharati and Chakravarty. See *HT*, p.26 and *HTSL*, p.58f. and p.165f; also cf., Bharatī, Agehananda, *The Tantric Tradition*. New York: Samuel Weiser, Revised American Paperback Edition, 1975. (First published New York: Rider and Co., 1965.); and Chakravarty, Ch., *The Tantras. Studies on their Religion and Literature*. Calcutta: University Press, 1963. [Hereafter, Chakravarty]

4. The regional division of the worship of the goddess is discussed in several of the Tantras and is taken up in detail below. Cf., *HT*, p.43. Śrīvidyā within the broader scope of the Tantric tradition is also considered as is its being a form of Sāktism.

5. The research and methodology employed for the study of the living tradition is detailed at the beginning of Part Two. Regarding historical materials, contemporary adepts were rarely well-informed on the availability of works in print or manuscript except those few of interest to their own lineage. Without the oral traditions of interpretation, however, literary study is bound to produce misleading results. See below for Goudriaan's comment on the necessity of oral explanations.

6. See HT, p.4f. While the present study limits itself to a particular sect of Tantrics in a particular region, it is not limited to only a small selection of Tantric literature. Śrīvidyā tradition draws upon a vast corpus of literature, and includes sources that are limited in scope to its principles and practices as well as those espousing the broader themes of Tantric Śāktism. An historical review of the Tantric literature important to the development of Śrīvidyā in south India is included in Part One.

7. This approach is inspired and is in a large measure dependent upon the ideas of Wilfred Cantwell Smith, especially as he presents them in his two works, Faith and Belief and Towards a World Theology. See Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Faith and Belief. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979; Towards a World Theology. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1981. See the Conclusion for further remarks on this matter.

8. A fact that has not escaped Goudriaan in his literary studies. It is clear that Sanjukta Gupta has had contact with living Tantrics but unfortunately these interpretations do not play a major role in her studies of ritual. (See HT, Part Three, Modes of Worship and Meditation.) I know of no other detailed study of living Tantrics available at present either by an historian of religion or an anthropologist although a study of the practices of the living Nāth Yogis (i.e., the traditions of Gorakhnāth) is now being prepared by David White, doctoral candidate in the History of Religions at the University of Chicago Divinity School.

9. As one south Indian Śrīvidyā adept noted, "We no longer collect manuscripts but books, although a few of us copy whatever we can gather in either form. The printed works though come often from persons with no knowledge or no personal interest in preserving the tradition. They are filled with misprints and include many things, such as mantras, that should not be printed but kept only in oral tradition. When they publish such things as paddhatis they must say that it is not meant for just anyone to practice

these mantras. That is a great danger. Persons not properly instructed in the mantras and the yoga can do great harm to themselves. Without the books so much of our knowledge would be lost or suffer greatly since there is no longer the great care taken to preserve things in manuscript; but with the printed books we leave ourselves open to those who either misunderstand or have not been educated into the tradition to practice it. I must say, there is both a good and an evil side to the modern situation." [Quotation from "Naṭarāja", 1984]

10. See HTSL, p.2f. Special mention should be made here of Sir John Woodroffe (also known by his pen name, Arthur Avalon) who pioneered the study of Tantrism as the first westerner to record his own personal involvement. Though lacking in critical scholarship, Woodroffe's work remains at times the only available source for published materials. His editions of the Tantrarājatantra and the Śākta Upanisads have become standard but are severely lacking from critical and scholarly points of view. Unfortunately no one to date has taken up the task of re-editing these basic texts, a situation that typifies the state of scholarship in Tantric studies.

11. The most noteworthy recent efforts apart from Goudriaan and Gupta are those of two great Indian scholars, V.V. Dwiveda and G. Kaviraj. Their editions of Srīkula Tantras and introductions to the materials are the most extensive and detailed studies available. Yet neither of these authors offers much discussion of the practice and ritual interpretation of the historical sources. See HTSL, p.220-221 and also the Bibliography for details of these author's works.

12. For a complete listing see HTSL, p.219ff.

13. Scholars in Buddhist studies have recently made significant contributions to the study of Buddhist Tantrism especially, Jeffery Hopkins, Alex Wayman and Robert A. F. Thurman. See the Bibliography for details of their contributions.

Note that Hindu Tantrism must consider three distinct but interrelated sectarian forms, namely, Śaiva, Śākta and Vaiṣṇava. On their respective developments and definitions see HT, p.6ff.

14. For a list of the available editions of Śrīkula Tantras see the Bibliography and also the bibliography provided in *HTSL*.

15. For a complete list of their contributions see the Bibliography.

16. See *HTSL*, p.3.

17. See *HTSL*, p.1ff., and *HT*, pp.7-9; also Padoux, Andres, *Recherches sur la symbolique et l'énergie de la parole dans certains texts tantriques*. Paris: Publications de L'Institut de Civilisation Indienne, 1964, p.44ff. Hereafter cited as "Padoux".

18. It is evident, for example, that Goudriaan's contribution in *HTSL* depends to a large extent on Dwiveda and Kaviraj and that his remarks on the authorship and content of texts are frequently based on manuscript catalogues and bibliographical sources such as Kaviraj's *Tāntrika Sāhitya*. This is not to suggest that all of his study is based on these compilations (he, in fact, does not discuss how he proceeded with his work) but it is certain that certain errors are merely repetitions of other's work he deems reliable. For example, his remarks concerning Lakṣmīdhara's alleged exclusion of non-twice-borns from the Samayācāra school cannot be the result of his own reading of the text. Goudriaan's philological abilities are never suspect and thus we can only conclude that he has relied upon others. Another example is his apparent following of Dwiveda on the important question of the identity of the author of the *Saubhāgyaratnākāra* as the Vidyānanda who authored the *Artharatnāvalī*. See below for the details of these issues.

19. See Goudriaan, *HTSL*, p.12.

20. *HTSL*, p.13.

21. Cf., *HT*, p.122f.

22. An example of this regional preference for certain texts is the unattributed *Tripurārahasya* which appears almost exclusively in the southern states in manuscript form, While an important work in the historical development of Śrīvidyā in the south, it does not appear to have had a similar impact on the northern traditions. It is, as it were, a local text composed in Sanskrit but without a pan-Indian influence. For more on the text see *HTSL*, p.166f. Another example is the authoritative *Paraśurāmakalpasūtra*

which prescribes the use of the five prohibited substances, the so-called *pañcamakāras*---meat, fish, wine, parched grain and sexual intercourse. In contemporary north India these prescriptions still carry a literal form of interpretation whereas in the south the literal practice has faded in favor of a "substituted" element (*pratinidhi*) or a complete rejection of the prescription achieved by a "selective" editing of the text.

23. This is particularly relevant to the present study since Gupta centers on the rituals surrounding the worship of the goddess in the form of the *śrīcakra*, the key element in the Śrīvidyā tradition. Her analysis is complete as an ideal or purely textual composite of the ritual but does not reflect the actual forms followed in the majority of living lineages. For Gupta's analysis see *HT*, Chapter Five.

24. A senior member of the "Guru" Mandali, Madurai, 1984.

25. A review of the major features of Tantrism is given in *HT*, see especially pp.7-9 and the references given by Goudriaan, in particular to Padoux. The Bibliography also provides a detailed list of references, of particular note are the works of Ch. Chakravarty and P.C. Bagchi.

26. See Guenther, Herbert V., *The Tantric Way of Life*. Shambala Books: Boulder, Colorado, 1976, p.2.

27. *HT*, pp.6-7.

28. Cf., *HTSL*, p.1ff.

29. Thus, the first definition of a Tantric is simply one who calls himself this, but given the feelings associated with the term this does not always suffice. One must look into the practices of individuals and groups and with what historical sources and traditions they identify themselves. Whether or not they call themselves Tantrics may not be as significant as their identification with all or some of Tantrism's characteristic features. It is perhaps more appropriate to use the term 'Tantric' as an adjective rather than as a noun since it does not always apply as a name identifying certain groups or a particular phenomenon but as a set of characteristics that describe a group or individual's ideas and values.

30. By other Indian religious groups I mean to include the Buddhists, Jainas and other "non-Vedic" sects as well as indigenous forms of shamanism in India and elsewhere.

31. *HT*, p.7f.

32. See *HT*, Chapter 6 for an extensive discussion of the yogic elements of Tantric *sādhana*.

33. This view stands in contrast to Bharati's opinion which is not incorrect but overstated. See Bharati, Agehananda, *The Tantric Tradition*. New York: Samuel Weiser, Revised American Reprint Edition, 1975, p.233; originally published, New York: Rider and Co., 1965.

34. Cf., Padoux, p.44f.; and *HT*, p.7ff.

35. See *HTSL*, p.8.

36. "Naṭarāja" of "Guru" Mandali, Madurai, November, 1984. See also Part Two.

37. Regarding the early history and development of Tantric literature see *HTSL*, Chapter Two.

38. On origins of goddess worship see Coburn, Thomas B., *Devī Māhātmya: The Crystallization of the Goddess Tradition*. Motilal Banarsidass: New Delhi, 1984, pp.1-86 for an excellent summary.

39. See Goudriaan's remarks in *HTSL*, pp.32-33 on the theological positions of Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava Tantrics.

40. Cf., Goudriaan who makes a similar statement in *HTSL*, p.8f. While this point is worth further reflection it seems tangential to the thrust of this argument. Sāktas emphasize all three elements of soteriology (i.e., self-effort, divine grace or intervention and the manipulative magic of mantras and rituals) and yet place a greater stress on the individual's role in affecting the final goal.

41. This statement is based on the experience of my fieldwork. While the vast majority of my effort was directed towards south Indian forms of practice, my correspondence and contacts touched down in virtually every region. This began as an effort to find south Indian adherents in areas other than the south but quickly led to further contact with adepts neither of south Indian origin nor claiming any direct connection with the south Indian regional tradition.

42. An example of this is the goddess Tārā, who in Hindu Tantric works has a mantra and yantra but no systematic forms of *pūjā* practiced widely. I am not referring to a

relative popularity in regard to the worship of other goddesses but rather an historical pattern in which other beneficent deities have not enjoyed the same degree of attention as Lalitā with regard to these esoteric images and practices. Goudriaan also maintains the same opinion. See *HTSL*, Chapter One.

43. See *HTSL*, p.75f. and also van Kooj, K.R., *Worship of the Goddess According to the Kālikāpurāṇa. Part I: A Translation with an Introduction and Notes of Chapters 54-69*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1972.

44. Or the notion, not uncommon in contemporary India, that all Tantrics are given to radical forms of behavior. See *HTSL*, p.3 and notes for further references.

An emphasis on oral and regional factors gives shape to what are otherwise purely abstract textual formulations. Regional distinctions made in textual sources do not account for the significant variations in the practices and customs (*deśācāra*) that color traditional lore and determine actual forms of ritual and faith. South Indian Śrīvidyā adepts, for example, differ from their northern counterparts in the ways in which they prepare themselves physically for ritual worship (*pūjā*).

45. See Part Two's profiles of Śrīvidyā adepts and their relations with non-initiates.

46. *HTSL*, p.59.

47. A lineage is defined, traditionally, as three generations or more of continuous transmission. Most Śrīvidyā lineages trace themselves back several generations and eventually to one of the twelve sages through whom the *śrīvidyā* descends. For the sake of confidentiality the real names of my informants have not been given in this document but will be made available to my dissertation examiners. This was one of the conditions guaranteed during the interview process though not all thought it necessary.

48. G. Kaviraj and V.V. Dwiveda are the notable exceptions, see the Bibliography for details concerning their work.

49. The most obvious example is that of Sir John Woodroffe who was a sincere Tantric votary though far too apologetic and lacking in formal academic training to offer a critical perspective. See the Bibliography for a list of his works. For further comments on Woodroffe see *HTSL*, p.3.

50. The two other historical commentaries on the text belong to Upaniṣadbrahmayogi, best known for his prodigious efforts to expound 108 Upaniṣads, and to a virtually unknown south Indian by the name of Rāmānanda. Upaniṣadbrahmayogi's works are available in editions published by the Adyar Library in Madras, including a translation of his remarks on the Śākta Upaniṣads (and including Tripurā Upaniṣad); see the Bibliography for details. Rāmānanda's work is not fully accounted for, though there are at least two recensions of a commentary bearing this name on Tripurā Upaniṣad. One is available in print though it has been edited poorly while the other remains in manuscript in the Adyar Library in Madras. The versions are so radically different that one might be led to believe that there are perhaps two Rāmānandas. This is unlikely considering literary evidence but awaits future study. Only a cursory use of these two commentaries is made in the translation since Bhāskararāya's work is self-contained and does not appear to refer to either or to the views expressed in them.

Part One
Chapter One
Kula Tantrism and Śrīvidyā Tradition

A. General Remarks on the Diffusion of Tantric Traditions

Śākta Tantric traditions created increasingly narrower self definitions as sectarian distinctions formalized. As Tantrics became more systematic and relied more on written sources to articulate their views, they simultaneously began to recognize and codify internal differences. With the diffusion of written materials came an increasing need for self identity within Tantric sub-traditions.[1]

Schools within particular traditions developed along both theoretical and practical lines and it is not always possible to determine from written sources alone if theories or rituals have historical parallels.[2] Theoretical distinctions and divisions in doctrine, however, are not unknown while ritual prescriptions are frequently codified in ways that could not be intended for literal practice.[3] At one level we must rely on what Tantrics say about themselves but to do so without the input of oral traditions critically analyzed would be to accept literary sources in ways Tantrics themselves do not.

One general feature that accompanies the effort to distinguish Tantric theologies and practices is the tendency for inclusion, that is, to affirm one's own position while not necessarily rejecting others. This general propensity,

however, meets with many exceptions. Śāktas exhibit the inclusive tendency by frequently including themselves as members of other sects, particularly Śaivas and to a lesser extent Vaiṣṇavas. Yet simultaneously they maintain their own distinctive beliefs. While this may appear inconsistent it is not incongruous with historical traditions. Śākta Tantrics appropriate concepts and values articulated in other systems without concerning themselves with what others may say about the consequences of embracing these views. This is especially the case within Śrīvidyā where powerful Brahmanical elements brought it closer to accepted forms of conventional ritual practice and the advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkarācārya. In some instances identifying or accepting the views of a particular non-Tantric group has led to a blatant contradiction in theory or practice.[4]

As Tantrism evolved more distinctive sectarian characteristics, their inclusive attitude towards other forms of Hindu faith naturally adapted common ideas to the special features of the Tantric sādhana. In some cases the appropriation of non-Tantric ideas is less apparent; it is not always possible to determine the origins of a particular view or concept and who first espoused it. Cosmologic and cosmogonic theories familiar in Sāṅkhya philosophy (such as the prakṛti/puruṣa split) and Kashmiri Śaivism (especially regarding the devolution of sound from śabdabrahman) have

played important roles in the developed forms of Tantric theology and, in most instances, it seems clear that Tantrism represents a later adaptation. But in other instances there is simply a conflict of claims, or no means of determining the origins of a view. In general it is clear that Tantrics have been less interested in the origins of particular theories than in using them to serve their own interests.

The mere absence of an early written reference does not necessarily preclude the possibility that a particular concept in the later Tantric system does not harken back to an older oral source. This is a common argument contemporary Tantric adepts make regarding the originality and preeminence of their own sect's positions and interpretations. Śrīvidyā, for example, accepts a common Śākta position on the creation of the universe through sound (śabdabrahman) which was likely to have been adopted from Kashmiri Śaivites who, in turn, may have systematized much older concepts.[5] Śrīvidyā's claims to the "authentic" cosmological interpretation are not based upon an argument for their original development but rather upon a concept of coherent presentation. By bringing systematic speculations into ritual practice surrounding the śrīcakra, Śrīvidyā claims to have revealed the "original" projection of creation.[6]

At the same time, Tantrics sometimes claim ideas found in other systems to be originally their own, maintained in oral forms from time immemorial.[7] In other instances they hold their views to be the keys to recovering the "original" esoteric wisdom locked inside the classical Vedic sources.[8] However much a particular group emphasizes its integration into the larger Hindu tradition and shares others' views, it usually does so to assert its own preeminence. Claiming to have been the originator of a position is not as important as having the "original" interpretation on a particular issue: to have access to the "original meaning" is, in the Indian religious view, to be in touch with "authentic" reality. Since Tantrics accept that ignorance (avidyā) of the nature of reality is the cause of rebirth, knowledge (vidyā) of the "original" cosmological situation is indispensible to liberation.

It is little wonder that Hindu Tantrics, immersed in a world-view in which the majority are committed to some notion of Vedic revelation, identify the Tantras as the secret and hence "original" meaning within the Vedas.[9] To the faithful Hindu nothing is more "authentic" than the Vedas because nothing is more "original", there is no more fundamental a revelation of Truth.

If Tantrism is an aberration of pristine Hinduism then it may well be argued that virtually all Hinduism after the

emergence of the Tantras is to some degree aberrant by its assimilation of Tantric concepts. Likewise, the majority of Tantrics envision themselves as part of the ebb and flow of the mainstreams of Hindu "Vedic" faith. The adoption, assimilation and creation of metaphysics, symbols or rituals across traditional lines has rarely been clear cut and is clearly of little importance to the Tantric votary.

B. Śrīvidyā: Goddess Worship Identified with the Srikula Tantras

The Śrīvidyā school locates itself in the midst of the much larger tradition of Tantric goddess worship. Its appearance and influence beyond the confines of Tantric Śāktism is evident from the period of its initial emergence and diffusion, perhaps as early as the fourth or fifth centuries, and certainly predates its first systematic literary presentations in the eleventh or twelfth centuries. Śrīvidyā's historical sources are identified with the general corpus of literature still called today in contemporary Kashmiri and south Indian tradition the Śrīkula Tantras.[10]

The characteristic feature of Śrīkula sources is the focus on the goddess in her beneficent (saumya or aghora), benign and motherly form. The Supreme Devī, called principally by the names Lalitā, Śrī or Tripurasundarī

contrasts sharply with the terrifying forms (ghora) of Kālī, Durgā or Caṇḍī the focus of the Kālīkula Tantras.[11] Holding the preeminent theological position within the system as the Supreme Principle in its dynamic and creative aspect, Lalitā, the supreme Śakti is always closely connected to her consort Śiva, her necessary compliment, the sentient and eternal reality. Śrīkula sources maintain a primary focus on the goddess but never forsake a connection to Śiva. Though not the centerpiece of theological speculation, Śiva retains his indispensible role as the source of creation and the final "goal" of the liberative process.

The Śrīkula also includes other forms of literature not formally under the rubric of Tantra. These include sectarian Śākta Upaniṣads and various hymns (stotras), praises (stavas) and protective charms (kavacas). These sources are just as Tantric as those bearing the title "Tantra" inasmuch as they reflect Tantric concepts and values and discuss subjects of similar concern. Śrīkula literature, however, also includes much that is tangential or irrelevant to Śrīvidyā as it has been historically practiced. Some Śrīkula works specifically address Śrīvidyā's distinctive theological or ritual characteristics and are devoted to its exposition; others have little or nothing to do with these concepts and focus instead on other

deities, rites or concepts, many with little relevance to Śrīvidyā worship.[12]

Śrīvidyā's practice and characteristic theological forms are also mentioned in Tantric sources not belonging to Śrīkula literature. Mantraśāstras such as the Mantramahodadhi, for example, include the śrīvidyā as a topic, as do other Tantric sources on mantras, yantras and ritual performance.[13] These sources are also cited by Śrīvidyā's historical and contemporary votaries.[14] Some non-Śrīkula texts, or portions of text, are authoritative because of their regional impact: the key factors being the precedence and prevalence of the local performance of practices and/or historical regard for an author in a localized setting.[15]

It is also certain that Śrīvidyā's votaries were frequently involved with other religious activities including the worship of deities other than Lalitā, the śrīvidyā and śrīcakra; that is to say, with the worship of other images, mantras and yantras. They are especially known for expertise in such traditional sciences as astrology and Vedic sacrifice.[16]

Individuals only marginally involved with Śrīvidyā offer insights into its theory and practice though their own statements of commitment demonstrate that their personal involvements lay elsewhere. The great Kashmiri philosopher

Abhinavagupta, for example, was undoubtedly well informed not only about Śrīvidyā's theoretical and practical elements but with the controversies within the school.[17] Nevertheless, there is no evidence to suggest that he was an initiate into the tradition. In contrast, Bhāskararāya, the eighteenth century south Indian theologian, while versed in many religious traditions and ritual arts openly committed himself to Śrīvidyā. Historical and contemporary Śrīvidyā adepts refer to tangential figures, such as Abhinavagupta, and may indeed express deference to their views, but rarely claim them to be part of the tradition. In other words, the tradition acknowledges a difference between "insiders" and "outsiders" but treats each source and figure individually regarding its potential value and authority. In our study of historical sources this distinction between tangential sources and figures and those focused on Śrīvidyā is essential. If we are to circumscribe Śrīvidyā historically and theologically we must consider the way committed adepts within the sect have given varying degrees of authority to "outside" texts and figures.

The immediate task is to define what makes Śrīvidyā the distinctive school within the Śrīkula Tantras. Despite sharing such universal Tantric values as secrecy and exclusive initiation, Śrīvidyā nevertheless gained recognition outside this limited purview. Having first

emerged in communities of high caste Śaivas, these individuals were frequently key figures in intellectual and spiritual movements beyond Śrīvidyā's sectarian parameters. From the outset of written traditions it is clear that Śrīvidyā votaries consider themselves a spiritual elite in a rather unstructured hierarchy of religious possibilities. Other theological positions are often accepted as "provisionally valid" and only occasionally rejected outright. One of the remarkable features in Śrīvidyā texts is the lack of dialogical exchange and confrontation. The usual pattern of position and counterposition common to Indian philosophical discourse is rare. Sources within the tradition tend to focus on disputes within the sect and only infrequently address "outside" issues. In other words, what is included in a particular discussion is considered only insofar as it is relevant to an "inside" topic. There is little or no posturing of opponent's positions followed by arguments demonstrating untenability.

Exchanges between members of the school itself are marked by varying degrees of tolerance, especially regarding highly charged theological, practical and social issues such as the inclusion of the pañcamakāras or the practice of kāmakalādhyāna.[18] In one noteworthy case the dispute centers on interpretation of a guru's works by disciples within separate lineages.[19] But little mention is made of

those outside the fold or their ideas unless it is intended to bolster internal discussions. Śrīvidyā tradition is clearly an historical instance of an initiated few arguing and discussing matters among themselves. What is most significant, however, is the extent to which their influence is felt outside these limited circles.

C. Śrīvidyā and Kula Tantrism

The connection between the Śrīvidyā school and the Śrīkula Tantras is plainly evidenced in both historical and contemporary sources. The extent to which Śrīvidyā adepts have identified with Kula tradition, that is, as Kaula Tantrics, leads to an investigation of the term's meaning both with Śrīvidyā's sectarian sources and in other Kaula traditions.

The difficulties with the term Kaula are similar to those surrounding the term Tantra. It covers such a wide range of possibilities that no simple definition does it justice. Abhinavagupta offers a variety of historical and theological explanations of kula and Kaulism. He attributes its founding with the figure of Macchanda, usually dated, if he is indeed historical, as no later than the fifth century.[20] Since nearly all Tantric materials regardless of sectarian affiliation refer to themselves as kula works

until the time of the sixteenth century Lakṣmīdhara, clearly the term is used not to refer to a body of literature *per se* but to a set of principles and values. The followers of the *kula* refer to themselves as *kulācārins*, those who "practice according to the *kula*".

In *Tantrāloka*, chapter 28, Abhinavagupta mentions ten early teachers of the Kula system and it is evident that Kaula, even from the earliest times, meant both Śiva- and Śakti-centered worshippers.[21] What then does it mean to call oneself a Kaula as, for example, do both Abhinavagupta the Śaivite philosopher and Bhāskararāya the Śākta Śrīvidyā adept? A satisfactory answer is elusive if only because of the multivalent meaning of the term and its historical evolution. In general, *kula* and Kaulism refers to the primary streams of Tantrism characterized by certain principles, values and norms of religious practice.[22] As principles Kaula concepts serve more as guide-posts to action than as sectarian prescriptions. They include the elements of ritual most frequently disputed inside and outside Tantric circles: the *pañcamakāras*, the worship of the female organ in *kāmakalādhyāna* and the inclusion of persons from all castes and both sexes as active ritual participants.[23]

The *Kulārṇava Tantra* is one of the earliest Kaula Tantras frequently cited as authoritative in the works of

Śrīvidyā commentators.[24] The text treats Kaulism as identical to Tantrism and is far more concerned with extolling the greatness of Kaula principles than with Śrīvidyā's distinctive theological and ritual patterns.[25] In this sense it is indicative of the majority of sources that Śrīvidyā adepts selectively bring into their tradition. Like other sectarian Indian theologians, Śrīvidyā commentators read texts with an eye towards their own interpretive agenda and see their distinctive theological elements, such as the preeminence of Lalitā or the _śrīcakra_, in sources that are arguably not directly concerned with these concepts. Perhaps the most classic example of this is the interpretation of a Ṛg Vedic verse as an esoteric reference to the Śrīvidyā mantra.[26]

Śrīvidyā's earliest historical commentators identify themselves as Kaulas as do all Tantrics. The extent, however, to which they distinguish their being Kaulas from a commitment to Śrīvidyā is not clear until Śrīvidyā begins to separate into distinctive sub-schools. Only when individuals identifying with Śrīvidyā reject Kaula Tantric principles is any distinction made in textual sources. Śrīvidyā's Kaula adherents deem sources authoritative without reference to sectarian divisions as long as they support and to some extent broaden the scope of textual traditions.

Abhinavagupta (c.1000 C.E.) lists many of the sources of Kula tradition in the twenty-ninth chapter of the Tantrāloka.[27] None of these, however, play a significant part in Śrīvidyā. Conspicuously absent from Abhinava's list is the foremost of Śrīkula Tantras, the Vāmakeśvara Tantra, despite its being known in Kashmir from the ninth century and its self designation as a Kula source.[28] Śākta-centered traditions appear only as sub-schools of the Śaiva Kula where, if Abhinavagupta is any indication, the focus lay primarily on the worship of various aspects of Śiva. The position of the Kashmiri Krama system familiar to Abhinava and viewed in opposition to Kaulism by Jayaratha does little to sort out the relationship of Śrīvidyā to the Kula.[29] The Krama, despite being Śākta-oriented, receives no separate mention in the works of Śrīvidyā commentators. To its earliest historical commentators, Śrīvidyā is a kula tradition and the Kula/Śaiva and Krama/Śākta distinction obviously did not pose any significant interpretive problem. Kula did not mean strictly Śaiva anymore than Krama meant to include all Śāktas.

In the Tantrāloka (35.373-374) Abhinavagupta maintains that the Trika, the Śiva-centered tradition he codifies, is the essence of the Kaula as fragrance is to a flower. Jayaratha, however, on TA 38.51 says that kula stands for Śakti which is called nityā (literally "eternal" but perhaps

a reference to the sixteen nityās made prominent within Śrīvidyā). This suggests a closer link to Śākta-oriented traditions and would offer a justification for Jayaratha's choosing to comment on the Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇava portion of the Vāmekeśvara Tantra. Pandey is correct when he asserts that Kula tradition is not another name for Abhinavagupta's pratyābhijñā system; he too subscribes to the opinion that it is a broader term indicating the basic principles set forth in the Tantras and the Tantrāloka.[30]

The primary meaning of kula is its literal Sanskrit sense, namely, a family or closely knit group sharing some formal or stated relationship, such as that of student and teacher. This is one of the first meanings attributed by Bhāskararāya in his Saubhāgyabhāskara on the Lalitāsahasranāma. He states plainly that the path is called Kaula because it is connected with a family (kula). It refers to what is obtained in a lineage and through one's own family.[31]

As a genre of Tantric literature characterized by it theories and practices, the Śrīkula Tantras declare themselves a sub-division of the Kaula tradition.[32] However, the assertion that Śrīkula traditions are entirely identical to Śrīvidyā is not shared by all contemporary adepts, especially in south India. According to them, Śrīvidyā is a special form of teaching within the Śrīkula

but not identical to it in all respects. In what respects Śrīvidyā differs from the Śrīkula Tantras is a matter resolved at the level of specific lineages. At the heart of the issue is the rejection of certain Kaula principles, such as the pañcamakāras, among those who harbor caste and religious sentiments that prohibit their inclusion in authoritative scriptures. The result is either an editing of controversial points or the outright rejection of a text as an authoritative source. Contemporary adherents of the Samaya sub-school are at the forefront of this disassociation of Śrīkula Tantras with Śrīvidyā. In general it is clear that the Kaula/Samaya distinction is not based on differing sets of scripture (or on sectarian affiliations) but on differing values and norms for conduct.

The first meaning of kula given by Bhāskararāya may be termed the most general and least technical since it is shared by all Kaulas regardless of denomination. What may seem to be confusion concerning the meanings of kula is more likely a reflection of the Tantric tradition's penchant for layers of meanings woven into complex, interrelated patterns.

On Lalitāsahasranāma (LSN) n.91, Bhāskararāya gives a more Tantric sense to kula, he says that the kula means the succession from the Supreme Śiva to one's own guru and that it refers to a way of life (ācāra) rather than the position

in society in which one is born.[33] In contrast, in the Setubandha Bhāskararāya remarks that kula means whomever belongs to one's own caste (jāti) but that if one follows a certain shared Dharma he or she becomes the same caste, presumably Brahmin.[34] Bhāskararāya has not disposed of caste as a central value in Hindu life. Rather he has shifted its meaning from birth in a particular clan to a shared set of principles and behavioral patterns. The often stated idea that Tantrics "abandon" caste qualification for initiation patently untrue; it is evident here that a transformation of the meaning of caste rather than a vitiation of the concept is at the heart of the issue.

Amṛtānanda, in his Yoginīhṛdayadīpikā, gives Kaula a meaning that equates it with Śrīvidyā and by doing so offers one of the clearest definitions of Śrīvidyā tradition stated in Śākta literature. He says Kaulas are those that identify five elements in their spiritual lives, the so-called śrīpañcakam frequently referred to by contemporary adepts: (1) the Self (ātman) identified with the Universal Brahman; (2) the guru; (3) the śrīvidyā, i.e., the fifteen or sixteen syllable mantra; (4) Śrīmata or the Auspicious Mother, that is, Devī in her beneficent aspects; and (5) the śrīcakra.[35] Amṛtānanda's identification of the Kaula path (mārga) with the śrīpañcakam is the first historical definition of Śrīvidyā in sectarian terms.

Bhāskararāya also says that *kula* means scripture because it explains and is identical to the thought of the worshipper and the object of worship. This also appears to be a definition of scripture itself. The goddess, he goes on to say, is the center of scripture because she is the object of Kula knowledge.[36] But Bhāskararāya continues to distinguish meanings of *kula* since these, he observes, are preserved in a specific set of scriptures; he quotes the *Paraśurāmakalpasūtra* (6.39) to the effect that *kula* sources should be kept secret.[37]

The more esoteric meanings of *kula* occur beside those already mentioned in the commentaries on *Yoginīhṛdaya*. These begin to draw sectarian lines *within* Śrīvidyā. Amṛtānanda in his *Dīpikā* says that *kula* means the body, a viewed repeated by Bhāskararāya; Kaulas, he goes on to say, are those who remain connected with the outer world.[38] In the *Setubandha* Bhāskararāya continues a similar line of thought when he says that a Kaula is one who has made the identification of knower, knowing and object of knowledge with the conscious self, the same definition he gives for a Śrīvidyā adept.[39] This idea is repeated in the *Saubhāgyabhāskara* in slightly different terms; here Bhāskararāya quotes the Kashmiri source *Cidgaganacandrikā*, attributed to Kālīdāsa. He says *kula* is the measurer (*pramātṛ*), the thing to be measured (*prameya*) and the

measuring (*pramāna*).[40]

In another passage, Amṛtānanda says that since the body is the *kula*, holding the body to be superior is called the practice of *kula* (*kulācāra*) while revering the shoes (*pāduka*) of the teacher, i.e., following the disciplines taught by the guru, is principled conduct (*samayācāra*).[41] It is not clear from this single reference if Amṛtānanda is distinguishing the Samayācāra branch of Śrīvidyā that emerges with Lakṣmīdhara. It is only Lakṣmīdhara that treats Samayācāra and Kaula Śrīvidyā as distinct sub-sects. Amṛtānanda does not seem to be aware of the sectarian distinction Lakṣmīdhara formalizes, especially considering the Kaula emphasis on external forms of practice and physical disciplines. Some two hundred years after Amṛtānanda, Lakṣmīdhara makes it clear that Samayins reject the Kaula injunctions for external worship. He instead centers the sectarian distinction on the Samayin's internalizing the entire spiritual discipline, including ritual practice.[42]

Bhāskararāya, a self-proclaimed Kaula, was aware of the internal division within Śrīvidyā but preferred the esoteric, yogic meanings of *kula* and *samaya* to Lakṣmīdhara's sectarian interpretations. Though he does not often name Lakṣmīdhara it is clear that he does not endorse all his views. In his remarks on the seven names of the goddess

that mention kula (LSN, n.90-96) and the following two that mention samaya, Bhāskararāya eschews the opportunity to discuss sectarian divisions and instead concentrates on esoteric meanings.[43] He gives a typical Tantric etymology to kula based on esoteric associations rather than strict grammatical formulas. He says ku means the earth and la absorption, that is the mūlādhāra cakra, the lowest of the six basic yogic centers within the body; the central path paralleling the spine, the suṣumnā, is also called kula because it is connected with the mūlādhāra center.[44] Quoting Svacchandatantra he says that the goddess resides in the thousand-petal red lotus at the pericap of the brain and is called kula while in the petals themselves called she is embodied in the kulaśaktis.[45] He then quotes an unnamed Tantra as saying, "'Kula means Śakti, akula, Śiva, and union of Kula with Akula is called Kaula.' Kaula means the essence common to both Śiva and Śakti, hence Devī is called Kaulinī."[46] Abhinavagupta repeats the gist of this remark in the Tantrāloka, which is quite possibly Bhāskararāya's source.[47]

Lakṣmīdhara, however, maintains that the basic stance of the Samayins differs from the Kaulas by a rejection of the pañcamakāras in ritual and the complete internalization of contemplative worship (antaryāga). The rejection of the makāras and Kaula practices, such as kāmakalādhyāna, appears

to follow historical traditions. His claim that the internalization of the ritual is an exclusive Samaya doctrine is more openly debated and rejected by Kaula adepts. In several places in his *Saundaryalaharī* commentary, Lakṣmīdhara splits the Kaula path in two, according to its Earlier (*pūrvakaula*) and Later (*uttara*) forms. The distinction is based on the manner of worship characteristic to them: *Pūrvakaulas* worship the *śrīcakra* inscribed in gold, silk or some other substance while the *Uttarakaulas* perform worship to the female organ.[48] *Uttarakaula* practices are considered outside the Vedic fold since they involve left-handed practice (*vāmācāra*), defined as the use of prohibited substances, such as the *makāras*, and unsanctioned behavior, such as *kāmakalādhyāna*. According to Lakṣmīdhara, Samaya worship is performed solely within the yogic centers of the body; here the goddess in her subtle forms resides and by worshipping her internally there is no longer any need for external practices (*bahiryāga*) including those employing ritual substances, gestures (*mudrās*) or verbalization (including mantras). All ritual becomes a purely mental performance and Lakṣmīdhara leaves no provision for outward manifestations of piety.[49]

Kaulas, on the other hand, not only favor external forms of ritual but sanction the use of the *pañcamakāras* in controlled ritual circumstances.[50] This does not mean that

by supporting external forms of sacrifice (bahiryāga) Kaulas reject ritual internalization (antaryāga). Bhāskararāya, for example, in his Upaniṣad commentaries discusses at length the transformative qualities of external worship and the process of gradual internalization.[51] Kaula Śrīvidyā practitioners, in fact, maintain the superiority of internal worship (antaryāga) while justifying the need for external rituals and disciplines. Contemporary adepts explain this position by saying that external rites should continue in order to maintain discipline and as an example for those who may never reach stage of internalization.

Lakṣmīdhara, however, asserts that Samaya and Kaula differences are based only on this fundamental distinction: Samayins worship only internally while Kaulas employ external forms.[52] Lakṣmīdhara may have come to this conclusion based on regional and historical influences. It is possible he is describing practices familiar to him since other no other sources appear to offer a scriptural justification.

Lakṣmīdhara's stated preference for norms of behavior and practices acceptable to high caste Hindu worshippers does not exclude non-twice-borns (atraivarṇikas or advija) from Samaya Śrīvidyā. This point should be emphasized since a misstatement of his views has been supported by a host of reputable scholars.[53] In his commentary on verse 32 of

Saundaryalaharī, Lakṣmīdhara states plainly that even outcastes (śūdras) can be qualified (adhikāra) for contemplative worship (upāsana) on the śrīcakra while in those rituals designated as Vaidika, traivarṇika caste persons are preferred.

Had Lakṣmīdhara restricted Śrīvidyā to only the high castes (dvijas) he would have created a precedent in Tantric traditions that undermines one of its chief tenets. Caste or birth per se cannot exclude a potential initiate from receiving Tantric teachings. The content of spiritual discipline (sadhāna) can be restricted or determined by caste but not access to initiation. Like other Tantrics, Lakṣmīdhara does not dismiss caste but rather distinguishes Tantric and Vedic qualifications. These points are taken up again in the consideration of contemporary traditions.

Lakṣmīdhara also makes theoretical and practical distinctions between Samayins and Kaulas, some of which are upheld by later Kaula commentators, such as Bhāskararāya. In one of their most distinctive interpretive shifts the Samayins maintain that the śrīcakra should be envisioned "opposite" to that of the Kaulas: the whole configuration turned upside down, as it were, such that the central bindu is no longer in the middle of the central triangle but in the space directly above it.[54] This repositioning is accompanied by a major theological reinterpretation; the

resulting four downward facing major triangles are identified with Śiva while the five upward facing are Śakti. This Samaya version of the *śrīcakra* still appears in some contemporary traditions but it is certainly not the popular figure nor has Lakṣmīdhara's theological reinterpretation gained a following among contemporary Samayins.[55]

The repositioning of the *śrīcakra*, Lakṣmīdhara contends, parallels yet another Samaya/Kaula difference. The Kaulas, he says, conceive the *śrīcakra* only according to the method of dissolution (*samhārakrama*) while Samayācārins prefer the creation method (*sṛṣṭikrama*). The practical implications of this distinction are straightforward: the dissolution method conceptualizes or "draws" the *śrīcakra* from the outermost lines towards the central triangle while the creation method begins at the central *bindu* and expands outward. This alteration implies a major shift in the practice of contemplative worship (*upāsana*). Later Śrīvidyā Kaulas do not seem to be aware of Lakṣmīdhara's strict identification of methods by schools or at least do not evince any interest. Bhāskararāya passes over the issue as a sectarian distinction and discusses both methods of conceptualizing the *śrīcakra* with equal deference.[56] Lakṣmīdhara's sectarianism is, once again, unaccounted for in other scriptural sources, suggesting that he describes practices and interpretations familiar to his region and

current to his times.

Contemporary Śrīvidyā does follow Lakṣmīdhara on the so-called left-handed (vāmācāra) and right-handed (dakṣiṇācāra) distinction. The left-handed path, defined as prescribing the use of "prohibited" substances in ritual, such as meat and liquor, and giving license to sex outside of marriage, is identified with the Kaulas. Right-handed worship rejects these practices and follows the "orthodox" norms of Vedic-oriented, high caste smārta Hinduism. Only the right-handed path is deemed appropriate to the Samayins. Lakṣmīdhara's general interpretation is without question the best known meaning of the right/left concepts, though he is perhaps not the first to articulate it. He also seems to reflect the historical situation even though Kaulas may not, in practice, always follow left-handed methods. While Kaula sources sanction these usually prohibited elements and include them as a matter of definition, historical commentators do not always suggest their use to be mandatory or that injunctions are to be taken literally.[57]

Bhāskararāya rejects the interpretation of left- and right-handed worship defined as these practices. Instead he offers a more esoteric distinction based on the acceptance of certain gods in worship.[58] His opinion clearly intends to defy the popular understanding of the left/right distinction. For Bhāskararāya a denial of the pañcamakāra's

appropriateness, for example, would undermine the effectiveness of the Śrīvidyā path.[59] Without naming Lakṣmīdhara, Bhāskararāya rejects his opinions without raising the specter of sectarian concepts. Rather, Bhāskararāya implies that Lakṣmīdhara's Samaya views are a mistaken account of an undivided tradition.

Bhāskararāya also interprets samaya such that one believes that there has been less doctrinal and practical distinction between the two schools than might be assumed from Laksmidhara. On Lalitāsahasranāma n.97 (samayāntaḥstha) Bhāskararāya assents to the idea that samaya worship is internal when he says, "Samaya is commonly...explained as offering worship, etc. to a cakra in the ether of the heart...".[60] He then identifies this teaching with the yogic process of uniting spiritually with the eternal Śiva in a ritual called the Mahāvedha. While the ritual he prescribes is obscure, his general interpretation is not: "The method of effecting this must be learned from a guru. This is what is meant here by samayācāra."[61] He later refers to Samaya as a tradition of teachers and scriptures, "Samaya also means the five books of Vasiṣṭha, Śuka, Sanaka, Sanandana, and Sanatkumāra, because they describe this internal worship."[62] But these historical/scriptural sources are also undocumented. (Contemporary oral tradition sheds no light on the matter.)

No texts bearing these names appear either in Bhāskararāya's own references or as independent works.63 He also etymologizes samaya in a manner not unlike kula. He says sama means equality while ya is the one who attains the goal, thus the term refers to the equality between the goddess and Śiva.64 Apart from these references, Bhāskararāya makes no explicit mention of the theoretical or practical divisions in Śrīvidyā traditions noted by Lakṣmīdhara.

The split between Kaula and Samaya is, however, far deeper than a disagreement about terminology or even one concerning more theoretical points of divergence, such as the refashioning of the śrīcakra. The central issue revolves around the acceptance or rejection of practices at the heart of Tantric tradition, such as the use of the pañcamakāras and the literal worship of the female organ in kāmakalādhyāna. For Kaulas such as Bhāskararāya these practices help define Śrīvidyā's Tantric character even when they are not accepted literally. Lakṣmīdhara, representing more conservative social and religious forces and hence unwilling to compromise on these issues, instead makes them a significant part of Śrīvidyā's soteriology: only the Samayins, he maintains, achieve the final state of grace and insight.65 That the majority of Tantric sources do not support Lakṣmīdhara's interpretations cause him no concern.

These sources are simply rejected outright or accepted only as partial truths. Lakṣmīdhara resorts to a hierarchical interpretation that places his own Samayācāra at the apex of possibilities. The guru retains the power to determine which portions of scriptures are authoritative and thus present the "correct" or "highest" forms of worship. In south Indian traditions the controversy and confusion concerning Kaula/Samaya terminology continues though the dispute over the central issue dividing the schools, as Lakṣmīdhara posited it, remains one of the clearest and most important divisions within contemporary Śrīvidyā.

Textual traditions leave the observer at a loss to determine the depth of these historical sectarian differences within Śrīvidyā. One can infer from the evidence that Śrīvidyā either began among high caste persons, most likely smārta Brahmins, not antagonistic to Kaula values, or that Kaula followers were merely the first to codify the tradition in written texts. Śrīvidyā adepts not accepting Kaula values and practices may simply have been initially less involved in the presentation of the tradition in the form of Tantras since they would be ill-disposed to many of the general Kaula principles. The Samaya texts, at least the Saundaryalaharī and other works attributed to Śaṅkarācārya, do not appear on the historical scene until well after the emergence of the written Kaula

Tantras.[66] There is no evidence to suggest that Śrīvidyā was exclusively Kaula from its inception or that Kaula values crept into the system only gradually: both opinions held by contemporary adepts holding opposing interpretations.

Kaulas are not necessarily, as Lakṣmīdhara would have it, "outside" the orthodox Vedic fold; unconventional, perhaps, in accepting certain controversial beliefs but not outside the social and religious communities traditionally setting the standards of Hindu orthodoxy. More will be said on this subject and the division of Śrīvidyā into schools in regard to contemporary forms of faith in Part Two. Of particular concern here is that the Kaula/Samaya and Left/Right distinctions have not been as clear as certain historical and contemporary interpreters would have it, especially in the manner of Lakṣmīdhara. Though he continues to exert a powerful influence, Lakṣmīdhara seems in many ways an isolated figure. Later Śrīvidyā commentators pass over his sectarian remarks. Rāmānanda, whose commentaries on the Tripurā and Tripurātāpinī Upaniṣads post-date Lakṣmīdhara, is the only other representative of the Samaya school as Lakṣmīdhara defines it and he does little to support the view that Lakṣmīdhara's Samayācāra represents a pan-Indian situation in the sixteenth century. The Kaula/Samaya confusion is comparable

to the regional divisions within Tantric traditions posited in the Śaktisaṃgama Tantra: the Tantra's views appear to reflect a particular regional situation within a given historical setting.[67]

1. Like other Hindus, Śākta Tantrics usually maintain the superiority of their own views without entirely discrediting others, that is to say, other interpretations are ranked loosely below the particular approved stance. Śrīvidyā is not exempt from this general pattern but there is surprisingly little discussion of other sects or philosophical positions. The focus is almost entirely internal. Śrīvidyā commentators delineate their own positions *within* the boundaries of the tradition's theological definition. This disinterest in "outside" matters reflects the self-contained nature of the tradition but fails to capture the general openness with which other's opinions are greeted. Śrīvidyā's self concern can easily be mistaken: views held in common with others or borrowed are not always acknowledged. This process of assimilation without engaging in formal dialogue--even in the usual philosophical manner of characterizing views in order to reject them---is discussed below.

2. An obvious example is the mantra-wise distinction of the so-called *kādi-* and *hādimatas* which is sometimes posed as a distinction based on two separate traditions of ritual and practice. The dearth of historical evidence supporting the view that each *mata* represents distinctive strands of Śrīvidyā leads to some confusion when reading traditional texts. Commentators often write *as if* they were, in fact, distinct sub-traditions when evidence seems to point to merely a difference in the construction of the Śrīvidyā mantra.

3. In the case of the *Saubhāgyaratnākara*, for example, we observe a degree of ritual elaboration that could not have possibly been intended for actual practice. The text and the prescriptions are simply too lengthy to be performed as set forth. We might ask why such elaborations were created at all given the "practical orientation" of the contemporary ritual tradition. The answer seems to be that such texts were created in order to perfect and elaborate patterns of imagery and ritual, that is, for the sake of symmetry, numerology or to create correlations with mythical beliefs, philosophical systems or symbols.

4. This is especially obvious when Śrīvidyā adepts with an affinity to the traditions of Śaṅkara claim their positions to be identical to the Śaṅkara who authored the *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*. According to Śaṅkara, for example, no ritual action can bring about a realization of the non-duality of the Self and Brahman. Śrīvidyā, like other Śāktas, maintains a "combination" of ritual and action

viewpoint (*sammucayavāda*) rather than this strict adherence to an "only knowledge" position. Likewise, Śrīvidyā as a Śākta Tantric sect also accepts a classic *bhedābheda* view of the nature of reality and does not accept either the *ajātivāda* of Gauḍapāda or the *kevelādvaita* position of Śaṅkara.

5. That is, the views of the fourth century Bhartṛhari in his *Vākyapadīya*.

6. This "original projection" is the *śrīcakra*, considered tobe the highest expression of the union of Śiva and Śakti.

7. For example, the esoteric interpretation of mantras as originating in the Vedas, it is maintained, proves that Tantric revelations only codify and systematize established views. Another example is the system of the categories of reality (*tattvas*) which Tantrics claim to have created rather than borrowed from Sāṅkhya and Yoga schools.

8. The *śrīvidyā* is itself interpreted as a Vedic mantra and identical to both the *praṇava* and the *gāyatrī*.

9. See the section on the *śrīvidyā* for examples.

10. *HTSL*, p.9f.

11. *HTSL*, p.9f.

12. *HTSL*, p.92ff.

13. *HTSL*, p.92ff.

14. One need only look to the *Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya* to see the variety of sources not strictly within the confines of Śākta Tantrism quoted by Bhāskararāya. Cf., his reference to the *Sūtasaṃhitā* on *Tripurā Upaniṣad*, v.1.

15. One such example is the *Tripurārahasya*, the popularity of which has been historically confined almost exclusively to south India. This text also demonstrates how works fade in and out of prominence. Having been a favorite work of the noted Tamil saint Rāmanamahārishi of Tiruvanāmali, *TR* enjoyed a brief period of attention which now seems to have faded entirely.

16. The *PKS* makes mention of the prowess of Śrīvidyā adepts in traditional astrology (see *PKS*, *diksakaṇḍa*) while Bhāskararāya in the *Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya* demonstrates that his reputation for Vedic ritual is not unfounded. See also

Part Two for instances of contemporary adepts noted for ritual and astrological feats.

17. See Pandey, K.C., *Abhinavagupta, An Historical and Philosophical Study*. Varanasi: Chaukhamba Publications, reprint of the second edition, 1963, p.546f. Hereafter referred to as "Pandey".

18. Lakṣmīdhara, for example, has little regard for what he terms Kaula systems and practices. Bhāskararāya, on the contrary, like other Kaula theologians seems to permit nearly every possible interpretation and many that do not follow his own.

19. The center of the dispute is Rāmeśvara Sūri's claim that Umānandanātha is not a direct or even a genuine disciple of Bhāskararāya. See the section on the historical development of Śrīvidyā for details of this dispute.

20. *HTSL*, p.18. Goudriaan summarizes the views of prominent scholars such as Kaviraj and Dwiveda on the historical development of Kaulism. The use of *kula* in Buddhist Tantric literature may also contribute to an understanding of its origins given its prominence in the early *Guhyasamāja Tantra*. Robert A.F. Thurman's forthcoming study of this Buddhist work may begin to shed more light on the origins and use of the term *kula*.

21. Pandey, p.547f.

22. For an overview see *HT*, pp.47-67.

23. For further discussions of *kula* and Kaulism see Pandey, p.542ff; *HT*, p.32f., and p.47f. These works also offer an overview of the concepts of the *pañcamakāras* and the practice of *kāmakalādhyāna*.

24. See Bhāskararāya on *Tripurā Upanisad*, v.15. Contemporary adepts also frequently cite this work despite the reservations many hold concerning its advocating the *pañcamakāras*.

25. There are two fine studies of the *Kulārnava Tantra* available but both are in Swedish. See Carlstedt, G., *Studier i Kulārnava-Tantra*. Uppsala, 1974; and by the same author, *Till Kulas Lov, Kulamahātmyakathāna ur Kulārṇava*. Uppsala, 1974. See the Bibliography for details.

26. See the section on the *śrīvidyā* for details.

27. *HTSL*, p.49

28. This is based on Jayaratha's remark that a commentary by the ninth century Kashmiri Īśānaśiva precedes his own, see *HTSL*, p.60 and also Pandey, pp.566-571.

29. On the independence of the *krama* system devoted to Sakta forms of worship see Pandey, p.461ff.; and Rastogi, N., *Krama Tantrism*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981.

30. Pandey, p.543.

31. See Bhāskararāya on *LSN*, 144. **svasvavaṃsaparamparāprāpto' mārgaḥ kulasaṃbandhitvāt kaulaḥ.**

32. See Amṛtānanda's remarks on *YH*, 1.2-3: also *HTSL*, p.58.

33. Sastry, p.88.

34. *Setubandha* on *YH*, 2.51cd-52ab.

35. *YH*, 2.51cd-52ab: Note that *Setubandha* also identifies Śrīvidyā through these five elements.

36. *LSN*, n.93.

37. *LSN*, n.91.

38. *YH*, 2.146-152.

39. *YH*, 2.146-152.

40. *LSN*, n.90, see Sastry, p.87.

41. *YH*, 2.76-80.

42. See Lakṣmīdhara on *SL*, v.11ff; and the chapter on *śrīcakra*.

43. See Sastry, pp.87-92; and *LSN*, n.90-99.

44. *LSN*, n.90.

45. *LSN*, n.94.

46. Sastry, p.89: see also *LSN*, n.94.

47. Pandey, p.595.

48. See his remarks on *SL*, v.41.

49. See his comments on *SL*, v.32.

50. cf., Bhāskararāya on *Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya*, v.12.

51. Cf., *Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya*, v.7.

52. Lakṣmīdhara on *SL*, v.8.

53. This position is maintained by W. Norman Brown and reiterated by Goudriaan in *HT*, p.33 but a careful reading of Lakṣmīdhara on *SL*, v.31f. clearly shows that his intent was to restrict twice-born persons to Samayācāra and not to restrict it to only the twice-born. Twice-borns may *not* follow any other form of Śrīvidyā practice, according to Lakṣmīdhara, while others may practice according to Kaula methods. Non-twice-borns are not precluded from Samayācāra. This issue is taken up again in the discussion of the history of Śrīvidyā literature.

54. See Appendix 2 for the Samaya version of the *śrīcakra*.

55. This issue is taken up in some detail in Part Two.

56. *Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya*, v.2.

57. Cf., Umānanda, *NS* and the criticism he draws from Rāmeśvara in *PKS*, 3.31ff.

58. *LSN*, n.220.

59. See *Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya*, v.12.

60. Sastry, pp.90-91.

61. *LSN*, v.98; Sastry, p.91.

62. *LSN*, n.97; Sastry, p.90.

63. The reference to the *Sanatkumāra* cannot be the *Sanatkumāra Samhita*, a Pancaratra work, or the *Sanatkumaratantra*. See *HTSL*, p.73.

64. *LSN*, n.97.

65. *SL*, v.31.

66. On the date of the *SL* see Brown's Introduction, p.29.

67. See *HT*, p.43.

Part One
Chapter Two
Earliest Historical Evidence for the Śrīvidyā tradition in Tamil Literature

The Śrīvidyā cult has produced a confusing litany of explanations for its origins both mythologically and historically. Before assessing the tradition's beginnings from its own internal descriptions it is worthwhile to consider the possibility of earlier external, non-sectarian textual and historical evidence establishing Śrīvidyā in a prototypical form.

Śrīvidyā as it emerges in the literary sources of the Śrīkula is a complete sādhana, its ritual and theological symbolism fully mature. Certain elements within the system especially those common to all forms of Śāktism, such as the ritual worship of the goddess by the use of mantras, mudrās and nyāsa, are certainly much older than the elaborate theological speculations found in written sources which discuss more specifics, such as, the relationship of the goddess Lalitā to the śrīcakra.

The earliest Sanskrit sources devoted specifically to Śrīvidyā---sources linking the figure of Lalita to the śrīcakra and/or fifteen or sixteen syllable mantra---cannot be realistically dated before the eighth or ninth centuries. Sources such as the Devī-, Kālikā-, Liṅga- and Brahmāṇḍapurāṇas frequently cited by later Śrīvidyā adepts

may well harken back to a hoary antiquity but any effort to read Śrīvidyā into these texts is impossible to substantiate historically. The situation is comparable to the prototypical images resembling Śiva found on the coins of pre-Aryan civilizations and cited as "evidence" of the god's ancient worship. Evidence that Śrīvidyā is plainly visible in literature from before the eighth century is at best suggestive and certainly not conclusive.[1] Śrīvidyā sources such as the Lalitāsahasranāma included as part of the Brahmāṇḍapūraṇa and the Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇava, the first part of the Vāmakeśvaratantra, may be much older than their appearance in written forms, reflecting ancient oral traditions, but there is simply no internal textual evidence or historical method that can substantiate these claims.

To establish the earliest possible date for Śrīvidya as it is portrayed in its post-12th century forms one must consider the complex transition from oral to written modes of transmission, the role of secrecy in the diffusion of Tantric thought and the authority of gurus to decide precisely what constitutes a lineage's tradition. It is certainly clear that oral transmission brought Śrīvidyā through an unknown period of development before it was systematized into written forms. While it is very likely that Śrīvidyā is a coherent system long before it takes shape in literary forms, this too is based merely on the

suggestive evidence of the fully developed textual tradition. Whether it simply erupted in a flurry of literary activity, as it has been suggested, seems unlikely considering the precedents of oral transmission elsewhere in Tantrism and the epigraphical evidence linking comparable materials before the emergence of the first written sources.[2]

By how long the oral tradition preceded the written is only a matter of speculation. Some scholars have suggested that Buddhist Tantric materials date from the first centuries of the common era and that Hindu materials may have emerged as early as the fourth century.[3] Determining which texts first codified Śrīvidyā's teachings depends to a large extent on the mention of titles or fragments of text in other sources and whether these provide reliable historical evidence. A comparable example is the mention of a portion of a line which later appears in a Śaiva _Āgama_ and occurs in an inscription at the Kailāsanātha temple in Kāñcipuram dated to the sixth century Pallava King Rājasiṃhavarman.[4] Is this citation referring to the actual Agamic source that takes a literary form centuries later? Without further specific references it is difficult to substantiate the claim though it has been assumed as evidence for the early appearance of Āgamic texts. Whether this citation refers to a _written_ text bearing a familiar

title that appears in later literature is not yet proven.

The case of the often quoted Rudrayāmala provides another example of verses transmitted orally and retained in lineages attributed to a specific title but remaining undocumented and not occurring in manuscripts bearing the name of the text.[5] The mere mention of titles or the appearance of fragments of texts in either epigraphical forms or in other datable works provides only partial historical evidence. References to forms of practice inseparable from the coherent Śrīvidyā system presented in later sources are necessary to establish its historical presence.

As we have noted, in the narrowest theological sense the Śrīvidyā tradition is defined by the combined presence of the figure of Lalitā Tripurasundarī, the śrīcakra and Srīvidyā mantra. Since the śrīcakra and the śrīvidyā are elements in the exclusive domain of Śrīvidyā tradition, their presence suggests at least prototypical forms of worship later systematized. The mere mention of the goddess Lalitā or Tripurā would not suffice in the same way. There is no necessary link between these names of the goddess and Śrīvidyā's characteristic forms of worship or an association with the mantra or yantra. Wherever the śrīcakra or the Śrīvidyā mantra are present, however, there is almost certainly an explicit connection to the beneficent

form of the supreme goddess (parāśakti). The mere mention of Srīvidya's mantra or yantra does not indicate its systematic presentation. It does, however, suggest at least a stage in the formation of the tradition.

In south India the identification of local goddesses with Śakti as supreme and beneficent is certainly no later than the sixth century.[6] It is the sixth or seventh century Tamil siddha Tirumūlar who first suggests the presence of some type of Śrividya worship.[7] If Tirumūlar's Tirumantiram is authentic, and there is no reason to believe it is not, and dates from his lifetime or shortly afterward, then we may safely conclude that at least Śrīvidyā's key elements had evolved by the sixth or seventh centuries to warrant mention in the work of poet not directly involved in its exposition. The extent to which these elements were part of a coherent pattern of ritual and theology is not apparent and Tirumūlar offers no clarification. At this time Srīvidya may have, in fact, existed in only prototypical forms when compared to the patterns of practice and speculation known to have existed some two to three hundred years later in south India. Since there is no comparable evidence in north Indian vernacular sources, it is impossible to evaluate Śrīvidyā's regional diffusion prior to its emergence as a fully mature written tradition in about the ninth century.[8] The śrīvidyā's presence in the

Tirumantiram indicates that at least elements of Śrīvidyā tradition existed before seventh century. By whom the mantra was used and how it was incorporated into a larger pattern of worship remains a mystery.

It is not clear if Tirumūlar's mention of these elements indicates the existence of a tradition identifying itself primarily with them. From the nature of his remarks there is evidently a good deal of speculation on the esoteric meaning of the Śrīvidyā mantra in the circles of yogis and _siddhas_. These speculations, concerning the identification of colors and sounds, do not appear to have carried over directly into the interpretations of later adepts.

Traditionally counted among the sixty-four Tamil Nāyaṉmār poet/saints of the Śaivas, Tirumūlar was a _siddha_, an accomplished yogi whose supranormal powers and bizarre personality are legendary.[9] When compared to the works of other Nāyaṉārs, especially the later Tiruñāṉasampantar and Appar, Tirumūlar's works are fragmentary and unsystematic in presentation. What is lacking in continuity of theme and subject, however, is made up by the suggestive quality of the poetry and its powerful command of archaic Tamil. It is not unlike a _siddha_ such as Tirumūlar to shift topics whimsically even within the same stream of thought. Thus, _Tirumantiram_ is best described as a concatenation of

loosely related verses whose order of presentation and themes are only disparately connected. Zvelebil suggests that the continuity of the Tirumantiram lies in its integration of Upaniṣadic wisdom, yoga, bhakti and the influences of the Tantric movement.[10]

As the title of the work itself suggests (Tirumantiram in Tamil means Śrīmantra in Sanskrit), the Tirumantiram was not meant solely for poetic expression or as a series of devotional verses.[11] Many verses are little more than obscure, mystical expressions of transcendence or recitations of mantras. These mantras are rendered into a cryptic, poetical Tamil evincing strong Sanskritic influences. It would seem that they were as difficult to decipher for sixth century readers as they are to twentieth century philologists and, in fact, even cursory study demonstrates that they cannot be translated using strict philological methods. Indeed it is quite clear that Tirumūḷar deliberately intended the verses to convey something other than literal or even poetic meaning: the mantras as sounds were themselves sources of power and expressions of divine revelation.

Tirumantiram, 1282, the first verse of the twelfth chapter entitled Puvanāpati cakkaram (Sanskrit, Bhuvanāpati cakra), is an explicit reference to the Śrīvidyā mantra in its fifteen syllable according to the kādimata

interpretation.[12] The first letter of each of the *śrividyā*'s three *kūṭas* (here called *vidyās*) occurs as the first Tamil letter of the first word in each of the verse's three lines. The Tamil configuration makes this evident:

kakarāti yoraintun kanīya ponmai
akarāti yorarārattame poḻūm
cakarārati yornankun tancutta vēṉmai
kakarāti muittai kamīya muttiyē [13]

Though in its Sanskrit configuration the second *kuṭa* of the *srīvidyā* begins with the syllable *ha* rather than *a*, as the second line of Tamil verse begins, this is a result of the substitution in literary Tamil of *a* for *ha*. *Ha* is not, strictly speaking, a part of the literary language. In the third line of the verse the Tamil *ca* is the common letter used for all three forms of the Sanskrit sibilant and should be taken as the first Sanskrit *sa*.

The semantic meaning of the verse, however, also draws an explicit reference to the *śrīvidyā*. Given the archaic and poetical language it might be translated:

> The letter *ka* and five other letters are golden colored.
> The letter *a* [i.e., *ha*] and the six are red in color.
> The four letters beginning with *ca* [i.e., *śa*] are pure white.
> The three *vidyās* [i.e., *kūṭas*] beginning with *ka* give desired liberation.

There are, to my knowledge, no references to the Śrīvidyā mantra this explicit in other texts of this period.

Tirumular makes no further mention of the mantra nor does he say anything concerning its place in his own spirituality. Its being the _kādi-_ variety of the _śrīvidyā_ only reinforces the idea that the _hādi-_ and other forms, either practiced or theoretical, were derivations of _kādi-_, or historical afterthoughts developed to complete a larger pattern of speculation. It is not, I hasten to add, conclusive evidence that only the _kādi-_ form was in vogue---Tirumular's failure to mention other forms of the _srīvidya_ may not even mean this was the only form he knew.

Tirumular's explanation of the mantra as tripartite is significant since this customary division reappears as part of later systematic presentations of Śrīvidyā---the three portions of the mantra's fifteen letters are identified with three portions of the goddess' anthropomorphic form and are each associated with different sets of spiritual accomplishments.[14] The three _kūṭa_ (literally, peak) configuration suggests that this basic interpretive principle was apparently known in Tirumular's day even to those evincing only marginal interest in other aspects of its practice.

While the reference to the mantra is unmistakable, the contexts in which it occurs adds little to clarify its place in Tirumular's own thought. The verse does not, curiously enough, occur in the section dedicated by title to Tripura.

Modern Srīvidya adepts point to the peculiar nature of the siddha to explain this discrepancy.[15] Literary study of Tirumantiram offers many examples of seemingly out of context statements and a disregard for systematic (or even coherent) presentation of ideas.

We may only conclude that in the seventh century in south India the Śrīvidyā mantra was well-known and important enough to be mentioned in the work of a traditional yogi not directly associated with the sect either historically or mythically. The śrīvidyā's mention in Tirumantiram affirms that it was established as part of general and popular mantric lore and that speculations on its meanings had already begun in earnest.

Tirumantiram verses 1021-1050 describe the goddess Tripura and the so-called Tripurā cakra under the heading cattipetam tiripurai cakkaram.[16] The figure of Tripurā described here is the familiar aspect of the goddess emerging in full form in the Lalitāsahasranāma.[17] Tirumūḷar does not, however, make any connection between this image of Tripurā and the śrīvidyā as mentioned in verse 1282; nor does he link Tripurā to the śrīcakra. Instead he describes a separate Tripurā cakra whose connection with the śrīcakra cannot reasonably be conjectured. The Tripurā cakra described here is not a part of later Śrīvidyā tradition nor does it emerge again in any later Tantric

literature. It appears to have faded into obscurity possibly by virtue of the later (?) identity of Tripurā with the *śrīcakra*.

From these verses it is clear that Tripurā in her inveterate anthropomorphic form is identified with Parāśakti, the supreme deity, and that her worship is popularly known in south India by Tirumūlar's time. She was associated with a Tripurā cakra but not, at least in *Tirumantiram*, with the *śrīcakra*. On the basis of the available literary evident it is simply not possible to say if Tirumūlar made any connections between Tripurā, the Tripurā cakra and the *śrīvidyā*. Tripurā's mention in terms of divine superiority is itself rather remarkable considering Tirumūlar's overwhelming Śaiva orientation. Like other Nāyaṉārs, Tirumūlar was committed to the absolute sovereignty of Śiva in the divine pantheon, Śakti is only a secondary figure in his theology.

There is, however, suggestive evidence for the presence of the *śrīcakra* in south India in the seventh century in yet another section of *Tirumantiram*. In verses 894-978 under the section entitled *Tiruvambalam* *cakkaram* Tirumūlar describes the cakra or a portion of it associated with the worship of Naṭarāja at Cidambaram. The name Tiruvambalam, appearing as the section heading in *Tirumantiram*, is an unambiguous reference to the city of Cidambaram as it is

known in old Tamil. In these verses Tirumūlar discusses some seven varieties of Śiva cakras including a portion of the so-called *sammelanacakra* associated with the secret (*rahasya*) form of Naṭarāja. The connection of the *sammelanacakra* with *śrīcakra* is discussed in Part Two as is the relationship of Tripurā and Śrīvidyā tradition with the consort of Naṭaraja, Śivakāmasundari. Of interest here is Tirumular's clear reference to the *sammelanacakra* of Cidambaram, an unmistakable reference to the so-called *cidākāśarahasya* that appears beside the Naṭarāja's figure in the temple.

If this Siva yantra and the *sammelanacakra* can be linked to the *śrīcakra* then there is strong evidence suggesting the presence of elements of Śrīvidya in established Saiva temple worship from at least the sixth century. The evidence confirming the relationship of the *sammelanacakra* to the *śrīcakra*, however, comes only in the thirteenth century work of Umāpatiśivacarya.[18] The part of the cakra discussed by Tirumūlar is only the "Śiva portion" of what is described as a combination of Śiva and Śakti elements.[19] In verse 928 he says that the author of the *tiruvambalam cakkaram* is Śiva himself and, in v.930, that the totality of creation in the form of the *brahmāṇḍa* is nothing other than the *tiruvambalam*. Whether the *tiruvambalam cakkaram* known to Tirumular includes the Śakti

portion of the sammelanacakra is a matter for further investigation since the Śakti portion of the yantra has long been suspected by Śrīvidyā devotees to be a portion of the śrīcakra.[20] If the tiruvambalam cakkaram is wholly identical to a portion of the sammelanacakra then there may indeed be enough evidence to accept the presence of at least prototypical Śrīvidyā in the sixth or seventh centuries practiced as part of a Brahmin-dominated form of temple worship. This form of Śrīvidyā we can be assured did not include the Kaula elements that were rejected by later Samayins.

South Indian tradition maintains that the sammelanacakra was part of the original portions of the Cidambaram Naṭarāja temple. Being within the golden-domed kanaka sabhā there seems little reason to doubt that the cakra of Naṭarāja was part of the temple tradition's worship from at least the period of this construction, certainly no later than the sixth century. No other cakra or configuration has been historically or traditionally associated with Cidambaram Naṭarāja. Tirumūlar's failure to mention the Śakti portion of the yantra or the śrīcakra explicitly does not preclude the possibility that his tiruvambalam cakkram is, in fact, a portion of the sammelanacakra. Tirumūlar was preoccupied with Śiva, the absence of a mention of Śakti does not mean she was absent

from the scene. If the hypothesis is valid then the composition of the mysterious cidākāśarahasya is at least partially solved by Tirumūlar. In verse 884 he supplies a description of the Śiva aspect of the cakra.

> Draw six lines vertically and six horizontally, thus you create five squares by five and within these are written the syllables of the Śiva mantra.[21]

As noted, the further clues linking the śrīcakra to the sammelanacakra appear historically much later in the work of the thirteenth century Umāpatiśivācārya. Suffice to say there is good reason to believe from Tirumūlar's references that the traditional view of the sammelanacakra as a combination of a Śiva cakra with the śrīcakra is not only plausible but likely.

With evidence pointing to the existence of Srīvidya's characteristic elements within the Śaiva temple cult as early as the sixth century we can hypothesize further concerning the period of composition for Śrīkula sources. Given the extensive development of Śrīvidyā's elements by Kashmiri figures and the early references to the Kaula movement in north India, it is likely that the formative period of the school's theology also took place in north India.[22] It had moved south by the time of Tirumūḷar and perhaps earlier if the evidence at the Cidambaram temple is conclusive. This would lead us to believe that mantra and

yantra development within Śrīvidyā comes from a period before the sixth century. If Kālīkula sources are, as Goudriaan says, well before the Śrīkula then these elements in prototypical or unsystematic forms too must be pushed back to a period before the sixth century.[23] This hypothesis is hardly novel but it is perhaps the first time it has been presented with at least some historical and literary references.

The śrīcakra's presence within the Cidambaram temple in the sixth or seventh century means it was part of the approved worship of Vaidikas. Its original development then might well have been among Vaidikas not opposed to its being associated with Tantric values. In his discussion of the earliest strands of Tantric literature in Sanskrit Goudriaan remarks,

> It was not based upon a popular movement, but was the outgrowth of the specialist position of an intellectual elite of religious functionaries from the upper classes, as a rule of Brahmans.[24]

Our evidence not only corroborates Goudriaan's point but suggests a developed ritual tradition accompanying the formation of such Tantric concepts as yantra worship from a period well before the emergence of written sources. Śrīvidyā's Tantrism did not develop strictly as an alternative to Vaidika spirituality, as some Tantric schools did, but in consonance with it, responding to a need for

greater ritual and speculative sophistication.

1. See Gonda, Jan, Change and Continuity in Indian Religion. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, reprint edition, 1985, p.25f.; first published in 1965 as Vol. IX in Disputationes Rheno-Trajectinae, Berlin: Mouton Publishers. Here Gonda argues convincingly that the images of ascetical-looking gods such as the those on the seals of Harrappan civilization while bearing a resemblance to later images of Śiva are not evidence that the Indus Valley culture was already worshipping a proto-Śiva image. In the same way, while there is circumstantial evidence for the worship of the goddess Lalita in ancient times as recorded in the purāṇas there is no method for asserting an historical link between names and places and the actual worship of the deity.

2. See Eliade, Mircea, Yoga, Immortality and Freedom. Princeton: University Press, 1958, p.200. Here the author argues, seemingly without historical evidence, that Tantrism arose suddenly in its literary forms. Literary evidence, however, suggests that the oral tradition's transition to written forms was more gradual and served to systematize an already mature ritual and speculative tradition. In support of this theory is internal literary in the Tantras such as the repetition of whole passages in a number of different texts and the fact that certain passages seem to find there way into sources based on regional factors and the gradual diffusion of ideas. When Śrīvidyā does emerge textually it is in such a state of sophistication that it seems implausible that its oral traditions were not in a comparable state of "completeness". In other words, the transition to written forms follows only after the oral traditions have at least marginally solidified sources.

3. Dr. Lokesh Candra of New Delhi also claims to have evidence supporting his theory that Buddhist Tantric materials had established themselves in fixed form from the first century, C.E. His work supporting this theory is forthcoming.

4. See Chakravarti, Ch., The Tantras. Studies on their Religion and Literature, Calcutta: University Press, 1963, p.20; see also Farquhar, J.N., An Outline of the Religious Literature of India, London: Oxford University Press, 1920, p.193.

5. See HTSL, p.47f. An example of this is also seen in the relatively recent Bhāskararāya. See his Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya, v.7. Here he quotes RY and yet the quotation does not occur in mss. or printed editions of the text.

6. It may, in fact, be much earlier given theories of goddess worship in Dravidian culture, see Eliade, Yoga, pp.200-210 for a discussion of this suggestion.

7. On Tirumūlar and other Tamil poets see Zvelebil, K.V., Tamil Literature. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrossowitz, 1974 (in A History of Indian Literature, Vol. X, fasc.1, edited by Jan Gonda) and also Tamil Literature. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975 (Handbuch der Orientalistik, II-2-I).

8. On the dating of early Tantric literature see HTSL, p.21ff.

9. On Tirumūlar's life and personality see Zvelebil, Tamil Literature, (Handbuch), p.68.

10. See Zvelebil, Tamil Literature, (History of Indian Lit.), p.55.

11. Tirumūlar defines a mantra as the "perfect concentration of the mind of anything." See Zvelebil, Tamil Literature, (History of Indian Lit.), p.55.

12. See Thiru Manthiram of Tirumūlanāyaṉār, Vol. 1, in Tamil, edited by Thiru P. Ramanatha Pillai. Tirunevelі, Tamil Nāḍu, India: The South Indian Saiva Siddhānta Works Publishing Society, 1957, second revised edition. (Pages are not numbered, see v.1282, the first verse of chapter twelve.)

13. Ibid, v.1282, chapter 12.

14. See the section below on the anthropomorphic aspect of Lalita.

15. One adept explained that the discrepancy is simply part of the unpredictable nature of the siddha. Another, more plausible explanation is that the compilers of the Tirumantiram (since Tirumūlar composed it only in an oral form) did not always understand the meaning of verses and that the compilation itself depends on their untrustworthy memories. Consequently verses can be scattered or confused and there is no clear method for discerning which verses belong to which chapter.

16. Tirumantiram as cited above.

17. For a full description see the section on the sthūla aspect of the Goddess.

18. See Part Two for the details of this historical link.

19. See *Tirumantiram*, v. 884. On the *śrīcakra* as a combination of Śiva and Śakti cakras see Venkataraman, K.R., "Śakti Cult in South India" in *A Cultural History of India*, edited by Haridas Bhattacharyya. Calcutta: Ramakrishna Mission, 1956, second edition, Vol. IV, p.256.

20. Ibid, p.256; this opinion is commonly held by members of the "Guru" Mandali in south India and is also maintained by various other individual adepts from a broad range of lineages.

21. See *Tirumantiram*, v.884, the text reads: **tiruvampalāmakac circcak karāttait/tiruvampalamaka irāru kirit/tiruvampalamaka iṟūupattain cakkit/tiruvampalamākac cepikkirai varē//**

22. See Dwiveda, V.V., *Upodghāta* (Introduction) to the edition of the *Nityāsodaśikārṇava* (In Sanskrit) for a discussion of the origins of Tantric literature in north India and its relation to Matsyendranāth. Also Dwiveda, V.V., "tripurādarśanasyaparicita ācāryaḥ kṛtayaśca", appearing in *Tantrayantra, essays on Tantra-Āgama Thoughts and Philosophy, Literature, Culture and Travel*. Varanasi: Ratna Publications, 1982, pp.64-78.

23. *HTSL*, pp.9-10.

24. *HTSL*, p.9.

Part One
Chapter Three
Śrīvidya in Text and History: Tantras and Early Sources

A. Determining Śrīvidyā Sources

Distinguishing Srīvidyā sources and figures within the corpus of Sākta Tantric literature is an important step for determining its theological and historical continuities.[1] The majority of adepts, however, eschew any effort to limit Srīvidya's textual sources to a specific set of works and instead prefer more inclusive self-definitions that locate the tradition within the larger scope of Tantric and Vedic literature. For whom would a narrow textual or theological self-definition be necessary? Śrīvidyā's historical adepts rarely found a need to make such formal distinctions. As one contemporary adept put it:

> We are aware that Śrīvidyā is a special discipline and we keep it secret to protect those not ready for its teachings. But we do not wish to draw unnecessary attention to ourselves. In this sense, we wish to be seen as simply Hindus. We do not consider Srīvidyā a sect but the source of all teachings. So I may discuss Visnu or Siva or any other god and any other topic, but this does not interfere with my own tradition. We do not concern ourselves with being called Tantrikas or Vaidikas, though I consider myself both. Since Srīvidyā is the vidyā of vidyās it is proper to use any text that contributes to its wider interpretations.[2]

Despite these remarks one also finds a startling lack of interest among contemporary adepts either in other traditions or in the teachings of other Śrīvidyā lineages.[3]

Srīvidya's Tantric character is exemplified by its emphasis on privacy and secrecy, elements that contributed to its long remaining purely oral in transmission. Historical adepts identify themselves as Śrīvidyā followers in written works dating from at least the eleventh century, yet even at this stage it is more a matter of association with the tradition's theological elements than a strict sectarianism. In other words, Śrīvidyā adepts have not always defined themselves _vis a vis_ other Tantrics (or other Hindus, for that matter) or as adherents to specific philosophical tenets but in terms of their allegiance to the unique combination of features that define the tradition.

It is not long after Tirumūlar, in the sixth or seventh centuries, that Srīkula sources and those specific to Śrīvidyā begin to emerge in written forms. When these sources are committed to writing, however, systematic forms of ritual, symbolism and speculative theology are already fully developed. Of particular concern to the present study are those figures and texts that have made a significant impact on the historical and theological development of Śrīvidyā in south India.

While a enormous number of texts dedicated to the theology of Lalitā Tripurasundarī, the _śrīvidyā_ and the _śrīcakra_ have been composed, relatively few have left a significant mark on the pan-Indian tradition. Several have

had only a regional impact such as the Tripurarahasya (TR) a source widely known only in the south.[4]

B. The Śrīkula Tantras and Other Early Sources

The Śrīkula Tantras are traced in Kashmiri traditions to a period roughly concurrent to Tirumūlar's reference to the Śrīvidyā mantra.[5] Many of the Śrīkula Tantras make explicit references to the worship of Tripurā, the śrīvidya and śrīcakra but only four can be considered as committed to the position that Śrīvidyā is the preeminent form of Śākta worship. The foremost of these must also be considered the oldest presentation of the tradition.

Vāmākeśvara Tantra (VT) is actually two separate works, the Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇava (NSA), also known as the Catuḥśatī since it consists of four hundred verses, and the Yoginīhṛdaya (YH), called by some commentators the Sundarīhṛdaya.[6] Historically, this material is treated both separately and as a unified text. Howerver it is treated, VT is the most elaborate exposition of Śrīvidyā tradition found in any single Śrīkula source.[7] As Goudriaan has remarked:

> Both...[texts] testify to a complete mastery of the subject which appears as a full-grown system... There can be no doubt that here we have two of the most accomplished products of Hindu Tantric literature. It is clear that these texts are still within the learned tradition which produced the intellectual masterpieces of Kashmir Śaivism.[8]

There can be little disputing Goudriaan's placement of the text(s) within the Kashmiri intellectual tradition. Śrīvidyā, like other Śākta sects, incorporates practically the entire speculative foundation of Kashmiri Śaivism into its theology.[9] Particularly evident in *VT* is the emphasis on creation through sound in three distinct stages, that is, *paśyantī*, *madhyamā* and *vaikharī*, a subject of much elaborate discussion among Kashmiri Śaivas such as Abhinavagupta. It is this creation theory that the *VT* parallels to the formation of the *śrīcakra*.

The earliest commentaries on *VT* are of Kashmiri origin though the text must have spread to the south in the early diffusion of the written tradition. It is not known if early Tantras such as *VT* spread from local origins orally before taking written forms though, if other Tantric traditions are any indication, there is no reason to reject this possibility.

It is also evident that the *Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇava* is the earlier of the two portions of the Tantra. No commentary appears in name or form on the *YH* until the 14th century though the *Tantrarāja Tantra* (*TT*) (also known as the *Kādimata Tantra*), a source certainly not later than the twelfth century, lists it as an old text.[10] The earliest extant commentary on the *Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇava* belongs to Jayaratha, the twelfth century Kashmiri best known as the

author of the Vivaraṇa on Abhinavagupta's Tantrāloka.[11] He comments upon only the NSA, which he calls Vāmakeśvarīmata, and does not seem to be aware of the YH. He remarks that Vāmakeśvarīmata was commented upon earlier by Īśvaraśiva, a prominent ninth century Kashmiri thinker.[12] Pandey suggests that Jayaratha's reference to Īśvaraśiva as the avatāraka or "one who brought down" the text, indicates that it was Īśvaraśiva who first systematized this presentation of the tradition.[13] Other than Jayaratha's literary reference to Īśvaraśiva there is no historical data concerning the appearance of this early commentary in either written or oral forms. Its verses are not cited in later sources. Since Jayaratha's commentary concludes after verse 33 of the fifth chapter while later commentators extend the text eleven more verses the possibility remains that the text either continued to expand or that different regional recensions existed.[14] Another early commentary attributed to Śaṅkararāśi, a contemporary of Īśvaraśiva, is discussed in Kashmiri tradition but this too has unfortunately not survived.[15]

It would appear then that Śrīvidyā had taken a fully mature written form by the twelfth century. If Silburn is correct in dating Maheśvarānanda to the twelfth century then it is entirely possible that Śivānanda's NSA commentary, entitled Ṛjuvimārsinī, must come from sometime in the

eleventh century since Śivānanda is frequently referred to by Maheśvarānanda as his teacher's teacher.[16] Maheśvara is a central figure in the development of the Kashmiri intellectual tradition and while he evinces no direct interest in Śrīvidyā both his grand-teacher Śivānanda and his pupil Puṇyānanda devote a major work to its exposition.[17] This connection further reinforces the historical ties between predominantly Śaiva Kashmiris and Śrīvidyā Śāktas. It also suggests that some interpret Śrīvidyā more as a distinctive mode of worship than as a sectarian tradition.

Among southern authors the distinctions between Śaiva and Śākta forms of worship are more pronounced. Unlike in Kashmir where Śaivas and Śāktas consider themselves within the encompasssing and common Kula tradition, in southern India these commonalities break down. Sectarian features are stressed because there is no comparable overarching historical-theological continuity within Śaiva intellectual movements and literature. Early southern Śaiva figures such as Tirumūlar or the Tamil poets Appar and Tiruñāṉasampantar express little interest in Śākta-centered theology and do not link themselves to Kula Tantrism. Ideas common to later southern Śākta Tantrics, such as Bhāskararāya, and medieval Śaivas are not traced to a mutual interest in Kula sources but to the more tangentially related Saiva Siddhānta

sources. These Saiva Siddhānta sources share with Kula Tantrism such important theological principles as the thirty-six tattvas and have historical links to Kashmir but do not belong to the Kula Tantric tradition. A characteristic example is, Umāpatiśivācārya, the southern Śaiva thinker of the thirteenth century who links Śrīvidyā with Śaivism in his devotional poem to Naṭarāja, the Kuñchitāṅghristava. He does not comment upon Kula sources but rather focuses his life's work on Saiva Siddhānta tradition. Tantric Śāktism in south India did not emerge in a common intellectual milieu as it did in Kashmir, but neither was it lacking commonalities with the south's dominant Śaiva/Śākta theological movements, such as Saiva Siddhānta, nor necessarily at odds with them.

Regarding the historical diffusion of Śrīvidyā sources, Goudriaan disagrees with Silburn and maintains that the Kashmiri Śivānanda was originially a Keralite who migrated to the north and flourished in the latter part of the thirteenth century. This opinion, it seems, is based on Dwiveda's conclusions which are less than entirely convincing.[18] Until there is more evidence to the contrary, Silburn's dates for Maheśvara remain equally plausible.

Chronologically the next extant commentary on the NSA belongs to Vidyānandanātha who follows Sivānanda. He refers to him in his own NSA commentary entitled Artharatnāvali.

He was a south Indian though he is not to be confused with Śrīnivāsa Bhaṭṭa, a prominent Śrīvidyā author of the south best known for his elaborate ritual compilation, the *Saubhāgyaratnākāra*. The confusion ensues because both figures share the same initiated name (*dīkṣānāma*).[19] Since the eighteenth century Bhāskararāya refers to both Śivānanda and the later Śrīnivāsa Bhaṭṭa it appears that Vidyānanda, author of *Artharatnāvali*, belongs to the intervening period.

These three Kashmiri-based commentaries, namely, the works of Jayaratha, Śivānanda and Vidyānanda, provide the basis for all further historical interpretations of the *Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇava*. Among contemporary adepts in south India only Jayaratha's work appears to have gained any popularity, the other two, though presently in print, are known only by Bhāskararāya's references. According to Jayaratha there are at least seven more Kashmiri tradition commentaries on the text but none appear to have survived.[20] There is a noticable lack of extant southern (or even Bengali) commentaries on the text but this does not preclude the possibility of there having been such works, nor does it mean that Tantrism or Śrīvidyā lacked support in the southern region.

Bhāskararāya's commentary, entitled the *Setubandha*, is the only major work that covers both portions of *VT*. He states explicitly that the *Yoginīhṛdaya* takes up matters

left unclear in the NSA. This commentary, remarkable for its detailed exposition of technical speculative and ritual matters, directly refers to the three Kashmiri commentaries. Bhāskararāya also mentions traditions, opinions and earlier vṛttis that do not appear in the cited Kashmiri sources. Though constrained by the format of commentary on a specific text, the Setubandha consolidates and, to some extent, anthologizes Śrīvidyā's tenets, values and practices. It is to Śrīvidyā tradition in south India what Abhinavagupta's Tantrāloka is to Kashmiri Śaivism: the authoritative and encyclopedic sourcebook for the entire tradition that follows it.

Abhinavagupta (Tantrāloka, 28.123) refers to a Nitya Tantra, another name associated with the Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇava, but this appears to be another text altogether. The NSA postdates itself to the Rudrayāmala since it explictly states that it deals with matters left out in the latter.[21] Pandey believes it is certainly posterior to the Jñānārṇava Tantra, another of the Śrīkulā Tantras advocating Śrīvidyā.[22] The title of text in any form fails to appear in any of the traditional lists of sixty-four Tantras though Bhāskararāya claims it to be the independent sixty-fifth suggested in the SL.[23] It is difficult to place the original text of the Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇava before the eighth century given the present state of historical evidence,

though its influence over the centuries has been felt among Tantrics beyond Śrīvidyā's relatively narrow circles.[24] Given Jayaratha's claim that there existed two ninth century commentaries it is safe to assume that at least the NSA portion of VT dates from well before the eighth century.

The contents of the NSA are ably summarized by Goudriaan.[25] The title is noteworthy, literally, "The Ocean of the Sixteen Nityās", since it refers to the sixteen "eternal" goddesses identified with the phases (kalā) of the moon.[26] The text itself has rather little to do with this form of worship especially in comparison to the extensive treatment given in the later Tantrarāja Tantra. The reason for this curious title may be due to Śrīvidyā's association with the systematic worship of these sixteen deities. (The tradition also shares the common Śākta theory that describes the "particularization" (kalā) of the one Brahman into thirty-six categories of entities (tattvas).) Śrīvidya, however, specifically develops the ritual worship of the nityās in relation to the śrīcakra.[27] The sixteen nityās are also part of general mantric theory shared by Śākta Tantrism in which they are identified with the vowels of Sanskrit; Śrīvidyā incorporates this into its own speculative structure by including it as part of the śrīcakra pūjā. It elaborates further by identifying the nityās with the sixteen syllables of the śrīvidyā mantra.

Especially significant is Śrīvidyā's use of the nityas to help in formulating a theological identity. Though the nityās are of minor importance in the larger structure of its ritual tradition, Śrīvidyā not only affords them a place (as other Tantrics do) but systematically develops their worship and symbolism such that its own sectarian identity is, at least to some degree, bound to them. A point, it might be added, that is not lost on the author of the Tantrarāja Tantra.

The second portion of Vāmakeśvara Tantra, the Yoginīhṛdaya begins with the goddess asking for a further explanation of points left unclear in the Nityāṣoḍaśikarṇava, thus providing the basis for Bhāskararāya's claim of textual continuity.[28] Its three chapters on the secret meanings of the śrīcakra, srividya and the worship (pūjā) of the goddess are the most detailed exposition of Srīvidyā's inner core of teachings available in any primary Tantric source. Bhāskararāya explains the structure of the VT by observing that the NSA explains external forms of worship (bahiryāga) while the YH gives the meaning of internal worship (antaryāga).[29] The two portions of the Tantra, he emphasizes, are merely sections of a single work.

Amṛtānanda, the Kashmiri pupil of Puṇyānanda who authored the authoritative Kāmakalāvilāsa (KKV), is best

known for his commentary on the YH portion of the Tantra from the so-called hādi perspective.[30] Though he does not say so explicitly, Amṛtānanda may well believe that the YH originates among hādimata followers. In anycase, his adherence to the hādi interpretation does not seem to have diminished his importance to contemporary Śrīvidyā traditions either in north or south, traditions dominated, as the historical tradition itself appears to be, by the kādi school.

Amṛtānanda both here and in his other works exhibits a depth of interpretation characteristic of Kashmiri Kula Tantra intellectuals. He often clarifies the text's dense and technical material and draws freely upon materials common to the broader Tantric tradition without diluting his own committment to Srīvidyā. Unlike Bhāskararāya in the Setubandha, Amṛtānanda relies on a more straightforward and less technical approach to the subject.

Assuming other historical commentaries or at least traditional oral interpretations have existed according to different lines of transmission, none seem to have left a major imprint on the contemporary tradition in south India. Bhāskararāya remains the focus of attention for the majority in the living tradition and those who challenge his views are as quick to cite him as those who claim his spiritual legacy or support his interpretations. One should not

underestimate the impact of the Setubandha on the later development of Śrīvidyā traditions in south India: all existing avenues of interpretation lead eventually to this source.

There are three obvious and interrelated reasons why Bhāskararāya has attained such a status in contemporary south India. (1) He is the the most recent figure to emerge as an authority within Śrīvidyā, one whose reputation for spiritual and literary achievements goes beyond the sectarian concerns of the school. Bhāskararāya is saint whose spiritual achievements are recognized as part of popular lore. (2) He settled in Tamil Nāḍu in Thańjavur district in the village of Bhāskararājapuram on property that was granted to him by the Maratha ruler Seforji. His links to the land, though no longer maintained, have made him a son of Tamil Nāḍu despite his having been an immigrant from the north.[31] His political patronage clearly contributed to his spiritual fame and his gifted property provided him the means to teach. (3) His presence in the south has led to claims of continuity in his lineage up to the present day. Several contemporary lineages in Tamil Nāḍu today trace their descent from Bhāskararāya and his pupils.

Bhāskararāya's encyclopedic knowledge of Śrīvidyā allows him to speak authoritatively and at the same time

draw upon the opinions of others, including the three Kashmiri commentators. The *Setubandha*, along with the independent treatise, the *Varivasyarahasya*, and the commentaries on *Lalitāsahasranāma* and the *Bhavanā* and *Tripurā* Upaniṣads are today the most widely read and definitively regarded sources in south Indian Śrīvidyā. Bhāskararāya has eclipsed others by responding with his own convincing arguments---but hardly ever does he make his points at his opponent's expense. The overwhelming impression he has left is that of tolerance for other's opinions and ways of life. Though committed to the belief that his own religious path is superior he manages to accomodate others without patronizing or antagonizing them. Like the historical Śaṅkarācārya his works are firm in their convictions but totally lacking in vindictiveness. No Śrīvidyā adept since has matched his traditional authority; and because he travelled and lived in northern India Bhāskararāya's influence extends beyond regional boundaries. Not even the prolific Amṛtānanda, whose *Cidvilāsastava* and *Saubhāgyasudodaya* are outstanding literary pieces as well as significant contributions to Śrīvidyā theology, has comparably influenced the pan-Indian tradition.[32]

Tantrism's penchant for secrecy has undoubtedly contributed to the unfortunate historical lacuna regarding other commentaries on the *Vāmakeśvara Tantra*. It is

difficult to trace the links between the Kashmiri traditions' interpretation of the text and its popularity in south India but it is clear from the diffusion of manuscripts that Kashmiri authors enjoyed nearly as much popularity in the southern regions as they did in their homeland. Precisely when Kashmiri sources reached the south is uncertain though the process is certainly complete before Bhāskararāya. The same degree of influence cannot be attributed to works originating in Bengal. This may be due to the Bengali Śāktism having been dominated by Kalikula rather than Śrīkula traditions. It is a curious footnote to these relations within Śrīvidyā between Kashmir and Tamil Nāḍu to observe connections with other traditions, notably Saiva Siddhānta and traditions of dance and aesthetics.[33] As one contemporary adept said:

> There is a special relationship between Śrīvidyā in Kashmir and in the south, especially here in Tamil Nāḍu. There was much exchange between the two regions and it is our belief that Saiva Siddhānta was deeply influenced by Kashmiri Śaivism. This is a point that Tamil purists [sic] will never admit. The regional distinctions in Śrīvidyā are more pronounced between the south and Bengal, and between the worship in Kerala and in the other southern states. The Kashmiri tradition is not unlike our own though I believe their interest in more philosophical matters is the reason why the ritual tradition is no longer so easily found.[34]

A later and still more detailed exposition of Śrīvidya occurs in the _Kādimata Tantra_, known popularly as the _Tantrarāja Tantra_, and referred to more frequently by the latter name in the works of Śrīvidyā votaries.[35] The Tantra in its written form is certainly no later than the ninth century.

The author's initial contrast of _Kādimata_ traditions from those termed _Kālīmata_ is no longer maintained in contemporary southern circles. There appear to be no other historical references regarding the unstated differences he has in mind between the two traditions (_mata_).[36] This appears to be the first mention of a distinction within the Tantric schools according to _mata_, "conviction" or "practice". The text assumes that both the term _mata_ and the distinction made between _kādi_- and _kālīmatas_ is well-known and offers no description of the differences. It is probable that _kādimata_ is synonmous with Śrīkula, or even Śrīvidyā since it appears to refer directly to the mantra, and that _kālīmata_ specifies the Kālīkula.

The term _mata_ itself warrants a brief analysis since like other comparable terms for "conviction", "practice" or "tradition" it appears again in later Śrīvidyā sources. As it is appears here and in later sources, _mata_, is usually associated with the different forms of the Śrīvidyā mantra, especially when used with the terms _kādi_- and _hādimatas_.

But this purely mantra-based distinction does not restrict its use as a general term. Within Śrīvidyā mata is used in a more general sense to distinguish schools of thought or particular forms of worship. This evident in Jayaratha's explanation of Tantrāloka, 1.18 in which mata is used as a general specification for a doctrinal school.[37] The Sammohana Tantra, a work of special interest in Kashmiri traditions and quoted frequently by Śrīvidyā adepts as a general source of Tantric authority, uses mata combined with the names of deities such as Kubjikā, Piṅgalā and Nandikeśvara suggesting the patterns of worship associated with them.[38] But in the works of later Śrīvidyā adepts, such as Amṛtānanda or Bhāskararāya, the term is interchangable with a host of others including ācāra "practice", mārga "path", sampradāya "tradition" and krama "method".

We may conclude that it is not the term for doctrine or practice that is crucial for Tantrics but the specific, technical term with which it is compounded.[39] Lakṣmīdhara, for example, the leading exponent of the Samaya school of Śrīvidyā, frequently interchanges mata, ācāra and mārga with samaya. The crucial term here is obviously samaya, not the term for "conduct" or "school". To Lakṣmīdhara samaya is a way of life, the Samayamata or Samayācāra is "conduct according to samaya principles" which he differentiates from

the kulamata, or "conduct according to kula tradition".

The text of the Tantrarāja Tantra is divided into thirty-six chapters (probably intended to parallel creation in the thirty-six tattvas) and has enjoyed a widespread popularity; it is especially important to both Kashmiri and south Indian Śrīvidyā traditions. Its foremost commentary, entitled the Manorama, was written between 1603 and 1604 by Subhagānandanātha, yet another Kashmiri, though he apparently did not live to see its completion, the task having been taken up by his disciple Prakāśānandanātha.[40] The TT is cited by historical commentators with as much frequency and authority as the VT, probably because of its sophisticated explanations of ritual procedures and succinct, revealing esoteric interpretations. Abhinavagupta says that Tantrarāja presents a form of the secret worship presented in Kaula literature.[41] Bhāskararāya is more reserved and offers no direct comments on the text though he frequently cites it to support his interpretations. He only says that Tantrarāja is not a separate Tantra nor part of the "original" list of sixty-four. In the Setubandha he notes that the list of sixty-four Tantras given in the TT is obviously defective since it lists VT as a separate work from the Sundarīhṛdaya, which is but another name for the Yoginīhṛdaya.[42]

Among contemporary adepts the TT is popular it would seem because of the availability of the text in print and its frequeny citation by Bhāskararāya. But the TT's ritual elaborations, especially regarding the sixteen nityās, do not seem to be practiced and appear more as theoretical embellishments than actual ritual guidelines as they were intended to be.

The Jñānārṇava Tantra (JT) is the third major Tantra focusing on Śrīvidyā and like the Tantrarāja it too states its preference for kādimata. It is cited by historical commentators frequently, especially by Brahmānanda and Pūrṇānanda, and according to Goudriaan its terminus ante quem is before the sixteenth century.[43] Despite its late emergence it has lost none of its authority among contemporary adepts. The Tantra contributes significantly to the interpretation of Śrīvidyā's symbolic triads and to the discussion of the mantric hierarchy.[44] This presentation has been extremely influential on modern south Indian adepts and several ritual handbooks (paddhatis) claim to be based on the authority of this Tantra.[45] The conspicuous absence of the five usually prohibited substances, the pañcamakāras, has not escaped the attention of those opposing their use; a fact used to support the claim that the makāras are not a part of the "original"

teachings of Śrīvidyā.

The Śrīvidyārṇava Tantra (SVA), despite its proclaimed human authorship and relatively recent sixteenth century date, has also enjoyed popularity among southern Śrīvidyā adepts.[46] The close connection between Śrīvidyā and the Śāṅkara tradition, which Vidyārṇava Yati the author has emphasized, is perhaps the most significant point raised in the text. The author follows the TT division into Kādi- and Kālīmatas but does not elaborate on the differences. Since the Tantrarāja is frequently quoted on other matters it is not unlikely that its positions are assumed in entirety. Curiously, the author also appears to have no aversion to Kaula sources which are cited as authorities despite significant divergences from the Śāṅkara tradition's values.[47] The SVA's references to the Rudrayāmala, like other citations of this text, do not appear in printed editions and hence contribute to an understanding of what the "larger" RY includes. Printed editions of the SVA are rare and a lack of availablity has contributed to its decreasing importance in living traditions. The SVA has, however, left a mark on modern south Indian traditions as a comprehensive synthesis of Śrīvidyā ritual and theology.

These four Tantras, the Vāmakeśvara, Tantrarāja, Jñānarṇava and Śrīvidyārṇava, are the most frequently cited

and commented upon sources in contemporary south Indian Śrīvidyā tradition. Only the *SVA* appears to have had a limited regional appeal. Other Tantras of the Śrīkula, such as *Paramānanda Tantra* and *Ānandārṇava Tantra* have, in comparison, had only a minor impact on living tradition.

Śaktisaṃgama Tantra (*SST*), which dates no earlier than the sixteenth century, is noteworthy because it appears to have had an influence on subsequent historical commentators. Its *Sundarīkhaṇḍa* offers detailed examination of *srīcakra* worship and details the magical results of other rituals.[48] The Tantra's late date may account in part for the extraordinary variety of subjects it undertakes to explain; its author codifies mantric practices by region and subtradition.[49]

Perhaps it is also the *SST*'s late emergence that accounts for its emphasis on the regionalization of Tantric traditions according to the prevalence of the worship of certain particular aspects of the goddess. Tripurā is merely one of the goddesses whose worship is described in the Tantra. *SST*'s presentation of regional distinctions, does not appear to reflect the contemporary situation though neither is it groundless in light of modern south Indian accounts. It may, in fact, reflect the situation known to its compilers though the scheme as outlined is complex and

not altogether consistent.[50] By introducing the *kādi*/*hādi* distinction the author implies that each *mata* focused on a different aspect of Śakti, a fact unsupported in other sources. The basic regional distinction, however, is the one most commonly referred to in contemporary circles. It follows what *SST* calls Kāshmira, Gauḍa (i.e., Bengal) and Kerala lines of tradition. Some contemporary southern adepts when presented with the scheme point out that Śrīvidyā is not associated with the Kālī traditions of Kerala. According to *SST* the divisions follow region and the *kādi*/*hādimata* distinction:

	Kerala	Gauḍa	Kāshmira
Hādimata	Kālikā	Tāra	Tripurā
Kādimata	Tripurā	Kālī	Taraṇi

This scheme would agree with the general situation in modern Kerala insofar as Tripurā and Kālī forms of worship are historically important. But it does not seem to follow the *mata* distinction. There is, in fact, no living *hādi*-based tradition upon which we may judge the historical situation or the presentation in the Tantra. It is clear, given the limited available resources, that the regional traditions were thought be distinctive enough to warrant a formalization of their variations. What these variations entail is not evident in the *SST*'s presentation but deserves a more careful analysis since contemporary adepts stress the

importance of regional influences on their history and practice.

Other Śrīkula Tantras than those mentioned here have all but disappeared from the traditions of living lineages in south India; the focus remains squarely on the practical ritual handbooks (nibandhas and paddhatis) that form the core of worship and spiritual practice.

1. Distinguishing Śrīvidyā sources from others would be undesirable if in the process an unwarranted degree of emphasis were placed on the differences rather than the continuities within the broader Śākta tradition and between Śrīvidyā and other Hindus in general. The tendency of its authors and sources is to be inclusive with regard to the breadth of theological possibilites while at the same time to make clear the distinctive elements that make their own interpretation superior.

2. "Agastya" of "Gāyatrī" Mandali, Madras, February, 1985.

3. Despite the fact that many contemporary adepts are known to one another by name or in reputation very few make any effort to meet or engage in dialogue. Contemporary lineages are self contained entities with little interest in the affairs or interpreations of others. Many adepts expressed interest in why I as an initiate should have such an interest. Many thought it a mere intellectual exercise that served no practical aim. The reasons for this are obvious if one reflects on the history of Tantrism and its transmission in tightly controlled lineages. Allegience to the tradition is interpreted almost exclusively as allegience to a particular guru and his teachings. That these teachings have common sources and a continuous history of development is only of minimal interest to adepts. As privately oriented Tantric traditions, Śrīvidyā lineages stay "within themselves" and rarely seek advice or even evince curiousity in like-minded individuals or groups.

4. Cf., *HTSL*, p.166f.

5. See Pandey, p.543ff. and *HTSL*, p.59ff.

6. The most reliable editions of the *Vāmakeśvara Tantra* divide the work into its two parts. See *Nityāṣodaśikārṇava(tantra), with two (Sanskrit) Commentaries, Ṛjuvimarśinī by Sivānanda and Artharatnāvali by Vidyānanda*, edited by V.V. Dwiveda. Varanasi: Sampurnanand Sanskrit Vishvavidyalaya, 1968 (Yogatantragranthamālā, 1); also edited in Sanskrit by K.V. Abhyankar, with the commentary entitled *Setubandha* by Bhāskararāya. Poona: Ānandāśrama, 1908 (AnSS, 56). In addition, the *NSA* with Jayaratha's commentary is available as: *Vāmakeśvarīmatam with the commentary of Rājanaka Jayaratha*, edited by M.K. Sastri. Srinagar: Government Press, 1945 (KSTS, LXVI). The *Yoginihṛdaya* is available as: *Yoginīhṛdaya with the commentaries Dīpikā of Amṛtānanda and Setubandha of Bhāskararāya*, edited by Gopinath Kaviraj. Varanasi: Sampurnanand Sanskrit Visvavidyalaya, 1979, second

edition, 1981, third edition, n.d. (Sarasvatibhāvanāgranthamālā, 7). For a thorough discussion of the history of the text and a review of its contents see *HTSL*, p.59ff. including references to the *NSA* as the *Catuḥsatī* and the *YH* as *Sundarīhṛdaya*. Bhāskararāya in his *Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya* also refers to *YH* as *Nityāhṛdaya*, see his remarks on v.1. *NSA* hereafter refers to the Dwiveda edition and *YH* to the Kāviraj, third edition unless otherwise specified (sometimes specified as "Dwiveda" or "Kaviraj"; all references to Jayaratha refer to the Sastri edition.

7. Cf., *HTSL*, pp.60-64.

8. *HTSL*, p.64.

9. See Padoux, A., *Recherches sur la symbolique et l'énergie de al parole dans certains textes tantriques.* Paris: Institut de Civilisation Indienne, 1976 for a thorough discussion of the principles of Kashmiri Saivism and their relationship to other sources and traditions.

10. See *Tantrarāja Tantra*, edited by Lakṣmana Śāstri with an Introduction by Arthur Avalon (Sir John Woodroffe). New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, reprint edition, 1981, Chapter 36 and the remarks made by Avalon on p.2 and p.71.

11. See note 6 for details on the edition of the text.

12. Jayaratha on *NSA* 1.47; see also *HTSL*,p.60 and Pandey, p.578.

13. Pandey, p.578.

14. The two other Kashmiri commentaries, *Artharatnāvali* and *Ṛjuvimarśinī* both end at 5.33 and only Bhāskararāya who composed the *Setubandha* after having reached the south goes on to verse 44.

15. See Pandey, pp.580-581.

16. Maheśvarānanda is author of the *Mahārthamañjarī*; see Silburn, L., traduction et introduction, *La Mahārthamañjarī de Maheśvarānanda avec des extraits du Parimala*. Paris: Institut de Civilisation Indienne, 1968, p.9ff. For another opinion see the *Mahārthamañjarī of Maheśvarānanda with the auto-commentary Parimala, edited with an Introdution in* Sanskrit (upodghata) by V.V. Dwiveda. Varanasi: Varanaseya Sanskrit Vishvavidyalaya, 1972, p.*ka*ff.

17. For more on Mahesvarānanda's role in Kashmiri tradition see Silburn as cited above.

18. See Dwiveda's Introduction to Mahārthamañjarī, p.5f.

19. Note that Dwiveda in his Introduction to NSA, p.21, maintains that the author of the Artharatnāvali is identical to the author of the Saubhāgyaratnākāra. This is not possible. Internal evidence to the contrary abounds in the Saubhāgyaratnākāra clearly demonstrating that the lineages of the two "Vidyānandas" are different. Unfortunately there is at present no available edition of the Saubhāgyaratnākāra in print though a recension from the Sarasvati Mahal Sanskrit Library in Thanjavur edited by Dr. G. Sundaramoorthy is forthcoming.

20. See M.K. Sastri's Introduction to Vāmakeśvarīmatam.

21. NSA, 1.123.

22. Pandey, p.553.

23. See Avalon's Introduction to TT, pp.35-36.

24. This is evident in Kashmiri Śaiva tradition especially. See HTLS, p.60ff.

25. HTSL, 60ff.

26. Note that to the ordinary fifteen visible phases of the moon is added one more, the "unseen" phase that is said to conceal Śiva's true nature. On the sixteen nityās, tithis or kalās, as they are called, see HT, p.57 and p.60.

27. See HT, p.57. During śrīcakra pūjā the sixteen nityās are worshipped before the beginning of āvaraṇa worship. They are place on the central trikoṇa five to a side with the sixteenth identified on the bindu. For details see the section on the śrīcakra.

28. YH, 1.1.

29. YH, 1.2.

30. Though it is treated as a separate sub-school, the hādimata appears to be little more than a variant mantric interpretation rather than a fully elaborated theology. For more on this see the detailed discussion in the section on the śrīvidyā.

31. On Bhāskararāya's biography in history and legend see the Introdution in: *Varivasyarahasya and its commentary Prakāśa by Śrī Bhāskararāya Makhin*, edited and translated by S. Subrahmanya Sastri. Adyar, Madras: Adyar Library and Research Centre, first edition 1934, fourth edition 1976.

32. These works of Amṛtānanda are contained in the Dwiveda edition of *NSA*.

33. According to some legends, for example, Tirumūlar was originally a Kashmiri who came to Tamil Nāḍu and brought with him Kashimiri influenced Śaivism. Contemporary Śrīvidyā adepts also note that traditions of classical dance (*bhāratanāṭyam*) written about by Kashmiri authors such as *Abhinavagupta* have flourished in south India. While seemingly coincidental these instances would suggest that perhaps an historical connection does exist linking Kashmiri and Tamil traditions. Certainly it is a subject worthy of more serious study.

34. "Naṭaraja" of "Guru" Mandali, Madurai, April, 1985.

35. See *HTSL*, p.64f. for an outline of text, p.64f. Note that Goudriaan's remark concerning the name of the text as "really" being the *Kādimatatantra* is perhaps an overstatement. Bhaskararāya, for example, frequently refers to the text as the *Tantraraja*.

36. See *TRT*, 1.5. and also *HTSL*, p.64.

37. Cf., *HTSL*, p.18.

38. See *HT*, p.40.

39. Goudriaan seems to have placed to great an emphasis on the emergence of the term *mata* when instead he would better interpret the differences between groups by focusing on "other" term in the compound. Cf, *HTSL*, p.65, ftn.24.

40. *HTSL*, p.65.

41. Pandey, p.575.

42. *NSA*, 1.7; See also Pandey, p.574.

43. *HTSL*, p.67.

44. Cf., *HTSL*, p.68. Concerning the hierarchy of mantras, stated or *implied*, within Śrīvidyā tradition see the chapter on the *Śrīvidyā*.

45. Since these paddhatis circulate privately in handwritten forms among adepts it is impossible to provide a proper citation. It is the usual situation, however, that the paddhati states at its outset that it claims its authority through a specific line of teachers and sometimes through a specific text. I have seen at least three different paddhatis of distinct lineages which claim to be based on the Jñānārṇava Tantra and several based on the Paraśurāmakalpasūtra, which includes, of course, the Nityotsava of Umānanda.

46. Cf., HTSL, p.71f.

47. See HTSL, pp.71-72. Goudriaan notes also the author's citing of the KT and RY but curiously does not point out the inconsistency between the positions taken in these works and the author's allegiances to Śaṅkara tradition.

48. HTSL, p.70.

49. See HT, p.43; also HTSL,p.71. The kādi/hādi distinction is taken up under the Śrīvidyā mantra.

50. As Goudriaan points out in HT, p.43f.

Part One
Chapter Four
Śrīvidyā in Text and History: Independent Treatises and Commentarial Literature

A. Gauḍapāda, Śaṅkara and the Śāṅkara Tradition

No historical figures' associations with Śrīvidyā are more curious or more important to the development of contemporary tradition in south India than those of Śaṅkarācārya and his teacher's teacher (paramaguru) Gauḍapāda. They are not only the earliest chronologically but their influences in text and reputation reach directly into the present.

Hacker and other scholars, however, have shown that the historical Śaṅkara was more likely to have been a Vaiṣnava and that it is doubtful, if not totally impossible, to verify his authorship of any Śākta or Śaiva works.[1]

While historians may dismiss the traditional claim that Śaṅkara, author of the Brahmasūtrabhāṣya and Upadeśahasrī, also composed the Saundaryalaharī (SL), the Prapancasāra (PS) and Lalitātriśatībhāṣya (LTSB), an overwhelming majority of Śāktas as well as the contemporary purveyors of Śāṅkara tradition accept these works as authentic.[2] These four Śākta texts are seminal to the development of later Śrīvidyā, especially the Saundaryalaharī which has attracted at least thirty-four known commentaries.[3] They are perhaps the most frequently cited works (except LTSB) within

Śrīvidyā outside of the Tantras and Puṇyānanda's *KKV*.

The *Prapañcasāra*, strictly speaking, is an eloquent exposition of *mantraśāstra* and deals with various forms of the *śrīvidyā* in the course of its presentation.[4] Its mention of Śrīvidyā's twelve traditional teachers and twelve respective forms of the *mūlamantra* suggests that the tradition had gone through most of its elaborate theoretical expansion by the time of its composition.[5] The work is of high literary quality, like all the Śākta works attributed to Śaṅkara, and can be dated to no later than the eleventh century and possibly much earlier.[6] It is cited frequently by Sivananda in his *Ṛjuvimarśinī* as well as in the *Īśānaśivagurudevapaddhati*.[7] A *Vivaraṇa* commentary, attributed to Saṅkara's immediate disciple Padmapāda, is complimented by a number of other elucidations several of which are of south Indian origin but none matching Padmapāda's in popularity.[8] Particularly noteworthy is the professed allegiance of the *Vivaraṇa*'s author to *hādimata* though he says little that illuminates differences with *kādimata*. The suggestion that the Śāṅkara tradition follows the *hādimata* because "Padmapāda" takes this position is not maintained in contemporary traditions. The attribution of this work to a direct disciple of Śaṅkara is, however, an indication of the intention of those involved in its composition to view its transmission as part of a continuous

tradition.

Bhāskararāya refers frequently to the *PS* to support his mantric interpretations and it is clear that he, like virtually all post-twelfth century authors, do not dispute Śaṅkara's purported authorship or that of the *Vivaraṇa*.[9] He refers to Śaṅkara frequently as "Sri Bhāgavatpāda", a common epithet for all the heads of the Śāṅkara *maṭhas*, but there is no doubt that he has the historical *Ādiśaṅkara* in mind.[10] The author of *PS*, however, by tacitly accepting the theories of *śabdabrahman* could not be the author of the *Brahmansūtrabhāṣya* who rejects this position.[11]

Regarding the exposition of Śrīvidyā, *PS* mentions the *śrīvidyā* in only a slightly more elaborate manner than later *mantraśāstras* such as the *Mantramahodadhi* (*MM*) which make only a cursory mention.[12] In a way comparable to the later *Śāradātilaka* (*ST*), also cited by Śrīvidyā authors such as Amṛtānanda and Bhāskararāya as an authority on *mantraśāstra*, the *Prapañcasāra*'s foremost concerns are the power of mantras to influence and effect change in the natural and social universe and to describe the mantric worship of deities.[13] It is only to this limited extent that the *PS* is part of Śrīvidyā literature. Because Śrīvidyā adepts have traditionally gained a reputation for general mantric knowledge, sources such as the *PS*, *ST* and *MM* play an

important role in the development of the broader spiritual discipline rather than as sources of ŚrĪvidyā doctrine or ritual.

The *Lalitātriśatīstotra* and the commentary (*bhāṣya*) attributed to Śaṅkara (cited here as *LTSB*), however, bear directly on ŚrĪvidyā. The "Hymn of the Three Hundred [Names] of Lalitā", part of the *Lalitopakhyāna* within the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*, is attributed to Śiva and Śakti who transmit it to guru HayagrĪva, who then gives it to his disciple, the sage Agastya.[14] This familiar scenario parallels the myth concerning the better known *Lalitāsahasranāma* (*LSN*). Lalitā and Śiva, in the form of Kāmeśvara, appear to HayagrĪva who relates to them the good fortune of having a disciple such as Agastya. It is Agastya's devotion to the guru and to Śakti which HayagrĪva maintains is the reason for this blessed vision. HayagrĪva then tells Agastya that Lalitā's three hundred names are not merely names to be praised but powerful mantras; they should be kept secret because they conceal the fifteen syllable form of the *śrĪvidyā*.[15]

The text itself follows HayagrĪva's description: three hundred individual names divided into groups of twenty each beginning with a consecutive letter of the fifteen syllable *śrĪvidyā* in the *kādimata* form. It is also clear that the author was aware of the *kādi*/*hādi* distinction since

hādividyā is one of the names attributed to Śakti. The text, however, is structured not only to follow the *kadi* configuration of the mantra but according to the fifteen rather than sixteen syllable form of the mantra. This fact has not gone unnoticed by contemporary adepts favoring *kadi* and the *pañcadaśi* mantra:

> The *Lalitātriśatī* shows that not only is the *kādi* the superior form of *śrīvidyā* but that the *pañcadaśi* is the original form of the mantra. In our opinion this must be true because there is so much dispute over the *ṣoḍaśi*.[16]

There is substantial internal evidence within the *LTSB* to indicate that it must come from a period later than the eighth century Śaṅkara. An important indication is the emphasis the text lays on the *ānanda* or blissful aspect of Brahman identified with the realization of the goddess's ultimate nature.[17] This point, equally stressed in the commentary, is inconsistent with the views of Śaṅkara the *Brahmasūtrabhāṣyakāra*. But more substantive contravening evidence is the explicit mention of certain types of *lakṣaṇa* or metaphor used to interpret the Vedic utterances. Hacker and others, show that this does not agree with the interpretations of *Brahmasūtrabhāṣyakāra*.[18]

The most likely possibility seems to be that the *LTSB* was composed in one of the Śāṅkara *maṭhas* sometime between the eighth and eleventh centuries. The *LTS* itself has not

enjoyed the same degree of popularity as the Lalitāsahasranāma and were it not for the attributed Śaṅkara commentary it may have faded into obscurity. There are, in fact, a remarkable dearth of references to it in Śrīvidya literature and it seems particularly important that it has been completely passed over by the northern, especially Kashmiri, commentators such as Amṛtānanda. Given the usefulness of the text for elucidating Śrīvidyā's general theology and especially the mantra this omission suggests that it was either unknown to these medieval northern figures or was not part of their regional literature. Since we can be quite sure that the text and commentary both existed by Amṛtānanda's time we may conclude that it is likely not to have been part of Kashmiri teachings if it was known to him by name or even in content. In south India, however, the text has a popular history and is one of the primary links between Śāṅkara tradition and Śrīvidya. Contemporary adepts also linking themselves to one of the Śāṅkara tradition's seats (pīṭhas) maintain that the LTSB is not frequently referred to by historical commentators because it is a more secret form of Śrīvidyā teaching than other stotras including LSN. As one adept put it:

> The [Śrīvidyā] mantra is taught in a hierarchy. At the top is the mantra itself; next comes the teaching of it in Lalitātriśatī where it is still in an explicit form as the first letter of the [various groups of] names. The mantra is also present at another level in the

> Lalitāsahasranāma and here it is kept out of the open so that this stotra can be used by any devotee. Lalitātriśatī is a higher form of qualification (adhikāra) and hence is not as common since it is taught more selectively. The names in the Triśatī are simply less powerful, less condensed forms of the mantra itself, where as in the sahasranāma the mantra is fully concealed to protect the ordinary devotee. For the adept (upāsaka), however, even the sahasranāma is a source of mantric power because he knows its secrets. Triśatī is a very popular text in the south because Śaṅkara wrote it in Kāñcipuram near the end of his days after all his philosophical work was complete.[19]

Southern Śrīvidyā adepts who dispute Śaṅkara's authorship of LTSB and do not associate Śrīvidyā with his traditions do not necessarily reject the importance of the LTS itself. One adept of this group explained:

> We do not believe Śaṅkara wrote this commentary on Triśatī but the text itself is very useful. It is more of a mantrasastra than a stotra and this is why it is not as popular as the sahasranāma.[20]

The third Sakta source attributed to Sankara is popular in all Śākta traditions (Tantric or otherwise) and across Srīvidyā's regional distinctions. Saundaryalaharī (SL) has attracted the attention of not only traditional Indian scholars crossing sectarian boundaries but western scholars interested in its poetic and religious value. Norman Brown's fine study and translation notwithstanding, much important scholarship concerning this text is yet to be

accomplished. While Brown correctly dismisses the attribution to Śaṅkara and observes the inadequacy of the commentarial literature for elucidating the literary meaning of the text, he does not consider the significance of Śaṅkara's purported authorship for subsequent theological traditions or give any indication of the important role the commentaries play in later Śaiva-Śākta traditions. While these matters are of little interest to him, they are at the center of our concerns.

There are traditionally purported to be thirty-six commentaries on SL of which nine have been edited and printed. Of these two stand out for their literary merit and illuminative power.[21] The most important and likely the earliest chronologically is Lakṣmīdhara's Lakṣmīdharī which is dated confidently to the sixteenth century. The author was patronized in the court of the Orissan King Pratāpatarudra Gajapati (1497-1539).[22] The commentary itself is significant if only because Lakṣmīdhara is the foremost exponent of Śrīvidyā's Samaya school and his SL commentary remains one of its sole interpretive sources.[23] Though Lakṣmīdhara is also credited with a ritual handbook for the worship of Śiva, entitled Śaivakalpadruma, it is clear from the SL commentary that the author's personal devotional focus is Śakti.[24] His foremost concern is to distinguish the Samaya from the Kaula tradition by drawing a

sharp sectarian distinction within Srīvidyà.

Lakṣmīdhara's sectarianism has not precluded his becoming an authoritative source even for those who do not share his views.[25] While Lakṣmīdhara stands alone on many interpretive issues without textual or historical support, his rendering of the SL's esoteric meaning has become the standard for nearly all later efforts.[26]

Lakṣmīdhara fails to mention the prayogas popularly associated with the SL's verses. These ritual directions, employing individual verses of the text for obtaining specific ends, are explained in some detail in the study of living traditions. Their association with the SL in recent times is so pronounced that their omission in all the edited commentaries is especially puzzling. It would appear that (1) the prayogas were not known to the historical commentators, (2) did not figure prominently into their interpretations of the text or, as it is more likely, (3) are of recent origin.

Kaivalyāsrama, whose Saubhāgyavardhanī is the only major commentary which does not cite Lakṣmīdhara, provides no biographical data and the circumstances of his life and work remain a mystery.[27] Contemporary adepts frequently cite him to substantiate their own views, regarding his opinions highly but offering no biographical or historical information. His popularity is restricted it would appear

to southern India and manuscripts of the Saubhāgyavardhanī are limited to southern libraries. But these facts alone do not lead to the conclusion that Kaivalyāśrama was necessarily a southerner. At best there is evidence of his limited regional popularity and the possibility that he is from southern India.

Of the other edited commentaries, three bear on the present study. Rāmakavi's Ḍiṇḍima is noteworthy for its effort to reconcile Tantric views of the tattvas with those of the Sāṅkhya school. The author identifies Śakti and Siva with Sàṅkhya's prakṛti and puruṣa and lists the Sakta's thirty-six categories (tattvas) without offering an explanation of how the ēleven "extra" tattvas in Tantric interpretations are added to Yoga's twenty-five or twelve to Sāṅkhya's twenty-four.[28] Rāmakavi also tells us that he is a native of Kāñcideśa, that is, Kāñcipuram in Tamil Nāḍu but gives no clues concerning his date. He is, however, mentioned in the Aruṇāmodinī of Kāmeśvarasūri and it is certain only that he lived after Lakṣmīdhara.

The Gopālasundarī of Nṛsimhaswāmi is unique among the published commentaries inasmuch as it interprets the text from the Vaiṣṇava perspective. Śakti is called Gauri, the goddess who emanated along with Viṣṇu from the single source called Mahāsarasvatī. Throughout the work, however, the goddess is theologically subordinate to Viṣṇu and considered

his consort. This commentary is important to a very small number of contemporary adepts born into Vaiṣṇava families and yet practicing Śrīvidyā. One such adept said that the presence of this commentary confirmed in his own mind that Śrīvidyā is not in and of itself a "sectarian tradition, but rather one that can be interpreted from either Śaiva or Vaiṣṇava perspectives."[29]

The author of the Sudhavidyodinī, a commentary of unknown date and origin, is significant for his claim that the SL was authored by none other than his own father, Pravarasena. This deviates from the otherwise univocal opinion that the entire text or at least the final fifty-one verses are from the hand of Śaṅkara (c.750 C.E.).

According to popular legend, Śaṅkara is responsible for gathering the first forty-one verses, the so-called Ānandalaharī, from Mount Kailāsa. In one version of the myth, he had learned all one hundred from Siva himself but in a mishap involving Nandikeśvara he was able to retrieve only the forty-one of the Ānandalaharī; to these he added the rest and gave the name Saundaryalaharī. In another version preserved in Tamil Nāḍu it is said that the whole text was inscribed by Śiva on the walls of his cave on Mt. Kailāsa though his claim to authorship was disputed by Sārāsvatī. In still another version, a heavenly being (in some cases a yakṣa named Puṣpadanta) heard them sung by Śiva

and inscribed them atop Mount Meru. These were retrieved by Gauḍapāda, passed to Śaṅkara's teacher Govinda and finally written down by Śaṅkara himself. The text of the Ānandalaharī portion of the text is also found as an inscription on the wall of the temple to Sugandhikuntālamba within the sub-temple of Matṛubhuteśvara at the Rock Fort complex in Tiruchirapalli, Tamil Nāḍu. Local tradition claims the inscription to have been made by Śaṅkara himself, written as he travelled through the city on the way to Rāmesvaram; he then completed the final fifty-nine verses before the image of the goddess Akhilandeśvari in Tiruvaṇaikōil (near Tiruchirapalli). This southern tradition is still maintained in the Śaṅkara maṭha in Kañcipuram.

The historical account of the SL's authorship, like all literary issues, is handled deftly by Brown.[30] There is no doubt, however, that the living traditions within the Śaṅkara maṭhas and most Śrīvidyā lineages maintain at least the core of the oral mythology: the Ānandalaharī was transmitted through Śaṅkara who received it from Śiva (or Śakti) while only the final fifty-nine verses are Śaṅkara's creation. South Indian traditions differ regarding the location of the text's composition but only those Śrīvidyā lineages deliberately severing themselves from the Śaṅkara tradition dispute its authorship.

The attribution of these four works to Sankara solidifies connections between orthodox elements of Hindu society, especially smārta Brahmins identifying with one of the southern Śaṅkara pīṭhas, and Śākta and Śrīvidyā traditionalists. As we have noted, there is evidence to support the possibility of Śrīvidyā elements of worship in established, orthodox circles from as early as the sixth century. By the time these works were composed, sometime after the eighth century, we can suppose that Brahmin dominated traditions, such as those in the Śaṅkara maṭhas, were fully conversant with Śākta practices, including those elements they would have opposed such as the pañcamakāras. The most acceptable method of interpretation of text and tradition was to assimilate acceptable elements and leave aside controversial topics.

The inconsistencies between the SL and other Tantric sources, however, are more difficult to explain. The cautious scholar is inclined to agree with Brown who believes that the absence of specific Tantric vocabulary within the poem points to no approximate correspondence between the SL and other Tantric sources.[31] But this opinion stands in such glaring opposition to both oral and post-tenth century historical traditions that it is difficult to accept the learned professor's theory. Given the late date of the text's composition it does not seem

likely that SL represents an early historical phase of Tantric theory but rather a refinement suited to the needs of a very specialized group. The text appears to accommodate and omit Tantric concepts to suit conservative, Brahmanically influenced Śāktism. For example, the inconsistencies between the SL's theory of bodily cakras and the usual Tantric explanation might in part reflect this effort to accommodate Tantric theories generally and yet separate itself from unacceptable specifics. Like Brown's theory, this is only another attempt to explain the difficulties involved in the composition and subsequent history of this work. Another explanation of SL's content is given by contemporary adepts:

> Saundaryalaharī is a poem extolling the praises of Devī and giving some of the details of Śrīvidyā without going into the intricacies of the pūjā or the theory. This is why it lacks the sort of technical descriptions you see in other texts such as Vāmakeśvara Tantra. We must remember that this is a stotra, not a Tantra, it was meant to be read with secret and special teachings included only in the oral tradition. Lakṣmīdhara provides many of these details. Those who view the text from the purely literary point of view will not be able to appreciate these hidden and unstated matters. In fact, we can say that those who reject that these secret or implicit teachings are actually in the text have been led purposefully to this conclusion by Śaṅkara. He wished to protect the uninitiated and leave the text open to all. He accomplished this by leaving out all the technicalities and instead using the secret and suggestive method of teaching. Those who think it is just a poem praising Devī and not an exposition of Śrīvidyā have seen only the surfaces, they appreciate merely the waves of beauty (saundaryalaharī) but not the ocean of meaning.[32]

Lakṣmīdhara chooses SL to define Samayācara and distinguish it from Kaulācāra because it completely omits any mention of even remotely objectionable Kaula elements, such as kāmakalādhyāna. The text, like all other attributed to Śaṅkara or Gauḍapāda, is thus acceptable to even the most conservative Hindus but lacks the distinctive Kaula Tantric marks common to most Śrīvidyā literature. Were it not for the attention given to the śrīcakra and the extensive commentarial literature, the SL would not be of particular interest to the scholar studying the intricacies of Śākta Tantrism. There is, however, perhaps no text with as much universal appeal to all religious factions within Śrīvidyā tradition as the SL---from the most conservative Brahmins and Samayins to the most socially antinomian Kaulikas.

Along the same traditional lines two Śrīvidyā works are attributed to Śaṅkara's paramaguru Gauḍapāda. If the Subhagodaya and the Śrīvidyāratnasūtras could be proven authentic works of Gauḍapāda they would be the earliest independent treatises in Śākta Tantrism. Unfortunately there is no reason to believe this is the case. To add to the difficulty there has been confusion regarding the Subhagodaya, which is sometimes attributed to Śivānanda and other times to Gauḍapāda.33 There exist, however, at least two different texts under this title, the common version

attributed to Śivānanda (appearing in Dwiveda's edition of the NSA) and sometimes attributed to Gauḍapāda and yet another which is attributed to Gauḍapāda alone.34 This apparently resolves the dilemma since none of the manuscripts the text attributed to Śivānanda that I reviewed were attributed to Gauḍapāda; I was, however, unable to find any copies of the Gauḍapāda Subhagodaya other than the manuscript versions in Madras.

The text solely attributed to Gauḍapāda describes the goddess's ability to confer various forms of empowerment (aiśvarya) on those who worship her mantra and yantra and thus explains the many ways she is considered propitious (saubhāgya). Like the other sources within the Śaṅkara tradition it eschews mention of the pañcamakāras and is considered by the handful of contemporary Samaya adepts familiar with it as an example of the "original" Srīvidya tradition.

The Śrīvidyāratnasūtras, also attributed to Gauḍapada, are better known to contemporary adepts than the Subhagodaya.35 The text focuses on an exposition of the śrīvidyā in its kādi and hādi forms and emphasizes the absolute identity of the deity, guru and mantra. In contemporary south India it is most frequently read with a commentary (entitled Dīpikā) attributed to one Śaṅkarāraṇya, a disciple of Vidyāraṇyamuni. This is due primarily to its

availability in the common printed edition. Manuscripts of the text are preserved in the Śāṅkara *maṭhas* at Kāñcipuram and Śṛṅgerī; the Śāṅkara tradition as well as the majority of living Śrīvidyā adepts accept Gauḍapāda's authorship without dispute.

Neither internal literary evidence nor historical records give an indication of the date of the text and while it does not seem plausible to accept that Gauḍapāda (c.600?), the author of at least substantial portions of the *Māṇḍukhyopaniṣadkārikās*, could possibly have written either *Subhagodaya* or the *Śrīvidyāratnasūtras*, his role in Śrīvidyā tradition is well established. While both texts are referred to in later works without regard to Kaula/Samaya sectarian distinctions (notably by Bhāskararāya and his Kaulācāra disciples, Umānanda and Rāmeśvara) they are particularly important for Samaya and other Śrīvidyā lineages linking themselves with the historical Śaṅkara and the Śāṅkara tradition. As one follower of a Śāṅkarite Śrīvidyā lineage said:

> There is nothing offensive about the Śrīvidyā works of Śaṅkara and Gauḍapāda. You will find no mention of the *makāras* and other unacceptable behavior. We accept them as fully authentic since it is our tradition that Śaṅkara was a great devotee of Devī. If he were not devoted to Sakti he could not have attained such fame.[36]

Whatever seemingly conclusive chronological or literary

evidence the historian unearths disputing Śaṅkarācārya or Gauḍapāda as Śāktas, the pious Śrīvidyā adept disputes. These works and concepts should belong to these figures, the Śākta argues, not only because they reflect the high literary standards associated with other work attributed to them but because they reflect a deeper, more esoteric aspect of their spiritual personalities. Since tradition asserts the authorship of these works, this fact alone might suffice to justify the Śākta's position. But a more theological reason underlies the position: viewed as pillars of conservative orthodoxy, Śaṅkara and Gauḍapāda bring a legitimacy to Śrīvidyā that sublates other "offensive" aspects of Śākta textual and historical traditions. As Śrīvidyā developed in its incipient literary stages within these conservative circles it became evident that Kaula-influenced works were not wholly acceptable. The tradition itself was obviously vindicated of any "misconduct" when stalwart Brahmanical sources justified and interpreted its practices within acceptable theological and ethical parameters. Precisely how and why the Śāṅkara traditions adopted Śāktism remains unknown, that they did is the crucial fact for post-eleventh century Śāṅkarites.

B. Ritual Sourcebooks, Treatises and Later Tradition

All primary works mentioned thus far are likely to have been composed before 1200 C.E. But it is in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries that Śrīvidyā undergoes its most prodigious growth. During this period authors elaborate upon the speculative concepts and ritual practices set forth in the Tantras. It is during this period, for example, that the Kashmiris Śivànanda and Amṛtānanda compose their Tantra commentaries and independent treatises, and Srīnivàsa Bhatta his extensive ritual compilations.[37]

Amṛtananda's teacher Puṇyànandanātha is best known for his treatise, the Kāmakalāvilāsa (KKV), which enjoys tremendous popularity in contemporary India, particularly in the south.[38] The text has been frequently translated into European and Indian vernacular languages including Tamil; these include commentaries by recent adepts.[39] It is perhaps the best known independent treatise in Śrīvidyā tradition before Bhāskararàya.

The KKV expounds the concept of kàmakalā, the "aspect of desire", as both a theoretical component in Śakta cosmogony and a controversial form of meditation involving erotic elements. The text focuses, however, on the multifaceted relationships between the śrīcakra, the śrīvidyā, the deity and the adept in the creative process. It adopts a standard position within Śrīvidyā theology:

liberation entails a complete knowledge of creative devolution of the One in Many in the form of the *śricakra*. Gaining this theoretical knowledge and the ritual techniques necessary to experience it in effect reverses the devolutionary process and leads the adept back to the original creative source. The text itself contains no language or imagery objectionable to conservative Śrīvidyā adepts; its intellectual approach to the *kāmakalā* concept is particularly appealing in light of Bhāskararaya's literal interpretations of these ritual practices as involving the worship of the female organ.

Puṇyānanda's origins are unknown. Bharati claims he is "a renowned Bengali tantric" while contemporary adepts maintain that he, along with Sivānanda and Amṛtānanda, are originally Keralites who migrated to Kashmir.[40] There is, of course, a strong tendency in contemporary south India to consider Puṇyānanda a native son; the rather conservative and intellectual approach of his work coupled with its aesthetic appeal make him a fine candidate for this sort of adoption. His professed allegiance to the *hādimata* has not deterred contemporary *kādimata* followers from accepting the *KKV*'s cosmological presentation as authoritative. It is also likely that Puṇyānanda had religious interests other than Śrīvidyā and that his expertise extended beyond the narrow scope of this rather technical, sectarian treatise.

He has, in addition, a complete familiarity with Kashmiri Śaivism evidenced by his facility with its technical terminology.

Some verses from Amṛtānanda's independent treatises, the Saubhāgyasudhodaya and the Cidvilāsastava, may in fact be Puṇyānanda's words. At the very least it is certain that his influence was strongly felt by Amṛtānanda who acknowledges his own authorship but who, in some manuscript colophons, praises his teacher as a direct inspiration. Amṛtānanda's independent works are receiving increasing attention from contemporary southern adepts since they have come into print.[41] Like the KKV they are essentially speculative rather than ritualistic inasmuch as the primary subjects are cosmology, the śrīcakra and theoretical devolution of sound from its source in śabdabrahman. Amṛtānanda's work, it would appear, has only recently begun to have an impact upon modern interpretations of Śrīvidyā in south India. These two independent works in particular have had a relatively limited exposure since they are known primarily through Bhāskararāya's references.

The Subhagodaya of Śivānanda, however, combines both speculative and ritual elements and for this reason retains an important place in contemporary interpretations. The vast majority of the text is given over to ritual prescriptions in the manner of a nibandha or paddhati while

the extensive gloss, entitled Subhagodayavàsana, provides the theoretical basis for the interpretation of the deities of the śrīcakra. Portions of both texts are quoted by later influential figures such as Maheśvarānanda in the Parimala autocommentary to his Mahārthamañjarī (MAM), Amṛtànanda in his Dīpikà on the YH and by Naṭānandanātha the author of the Cidvallī, the frequently quoted gloss on the KKV. References in the Ṛjuvimarśinī confirm Sivànanda's authorship of these two works but give no further clues as to his dates or other biographical information. Following Silburn's placing of Maheśvarānanda in the twelfth century, Śivānanda would naturally be considered much earlier since he is repeatedly referred to as the paramaguru.[42] The question remains open, however, as Dwiveda maintains a later date for Maheśvara and thus places Śivānanda in this 13th-14th century period of high literary activity.[43]

While Maheśvara's MAM is not, strictly speaking, a work concerning Śrīvidyā it has nonetheless exercised a profound influence on Śrīvidyā thinkers. It is frequently quoted by contemporary adepts who link themselves to its Kashmiri Śaiva views concerning the stages of sound and the relationship of Śiva and Śakti as the creators of the universe. Potentially more important would be Maheśvara's commentary on the Paramānanda Tantra entitled Saubhāgyānandasamdoha which has not been recovered and is

known to contemporary southern adepts only by name. From the title of this work, its connection to a minor Śrīkula Tantra and from Maheśvara's relationship to Śivānanda it is safe to assume that the author was initiated into Śrīvidyā. As it is the case with many of the Kashmiris, including such figures as Jayaratha, Maheśvara was not preoccupied with Śrīvidyā in his writings. His own commitment to the tradition, however, if measured solely against his attention to other subjects may be misleading. If contemporary tradition reflects the historical situation it is possible that the author wrote on many subjects and may not have chosen to write on the subject of his personal commitment. One contemporary adept with whom I had contact, for example, is a committed practitioner and teacher of Śrīvidyā and yet has spent his entire career writing on other subjects, especially on Saiva Siddhānta theology. We cannot necessarily assume that historical authors, such as Maheśvara or Jayaratha, whose written works focus on subjects other than Śrīvidyā are not initiates or are not, in the very least, authorities on Śrīvidyā when historical connections (or interpretations) suggest a strong relationship to the tradition. What seems likely with Maheśvara, as with Jayaratha, is that Śrīvidyā played a central but not an exclusive role in their religious lives. As Śaivas their acceptance and interpretation of Śrīvidya

principles affirms its significance in the broader spectrum of Kaula theology encompassing Śaiva and Śākta Tantric traditions. Thus a Śrīvidyā adept versed in the tradition and initiated into its practices can also have other religious commitments or express interest in other subjects and yet does not view these as interfering or inhibiting a commitment to Śrīvidyā.

Śrīnivāsa Bhaṭṭa, better known in contemporary circles by his initiated name Vidyānandanātha (or more frequently in the texts as Śrīvidyānandanātha), leaves no doubt as to his commitment to Śrīvidyā despite the strong possibility of his having written the Śaiva ritual compendium entitled *Sivārcanacandrikā*.[44] His immense *Saubhāgyaratnākara* (*SRK*) is perhaps the most extensive of the ritual compilations devoted to Śrīvidyā and the *śrīcakra pūjā*.[45] His spiritual lineage further confirms his commitment to Śrīvidyā worship since his teacher, Sundarācārya, a Kashmiri from Jālandhara, composed the voluminous *Lalitārcanacandrikā* (*LAC*) under the initiated name Saccidānandanātha. He did so, it is said, in order to dispel the doubts of his students.[46] The *LAC* is certainly one of the most important of the early *paddhatis* devoted to *śrīcakra* worship especially if it precedes the authoritative *Paraśurāmakalpasūtra* (*PKS*). Its descriptions follow the familiar patterns of Śākta ritual taken up with

more scrutiny by Srīnivāsa Bhaṭṭa in the *SRK*. The colophons of the *LAC* trace Śrīnivāsa's lineage back yet another generation to the *paramaguru*, Svayamprahāsānandanātha who, according to contemporary oral tradition, was also a renowned Śrīvidyā adept of his day. The *dīkṣānāma* ending with -*ānandanātha* provides at least superficial historical evidence in support of his being an initiate.

Like the Vidyānanda of the *Artharatnāvali*, Śrīnivasa is dated to the late twelfth century.[47] His detailed exposition of Śrīvidyā ritual, however, would seem to indicate a somewhat later date. There are no other comparable ritual materials available from this period and placing him in the twelfth century date has an obvious affect on the date of his teacher and lineage. It is nonetheless likely that Śrīvidyā traditionalists elaborated and systematized to this degree by the twelfth century especially in light of the extensive codification present in Tantras dating from at least the ninth century.

The influence of the *SRK* on the thought of Bhāskararāya and later Śrīvidyā adepts is significant. Bhāskararāya's frequent citations give the text an air of authority comparable to the *PKS* and the work's lasting effects work are seen on several of the living lineages in south India including some not tracing themselves directly to Bhāskararāya. The importance of the *SRK* is evident in that

a knowledge of its contents is widespread in south India despite its being unpublished. Several contemporary adepts attributed this to a belief that Śrīnivāsa must have been a southerner despite his teacher's Kashmiri origins. Having been a native son or at least settled in the south would suggest his having left a spiritual legacy with an enduring influence even if the paramparas have vanished. Adepts cite Śivānanda as an analogous example of the connections between Kashmiri and southern traditions.

The preeminent place for ritual textbooks of Śrīvidya worship is reserved for the Paraśurāmakalpasūtra.[48] Contemporary southern adepts point to the attribution of the text to the figure of Paraśurāma as evidence of its southern origins.[49] Goudriaan's belief that the text is not much older than the sixteenth century remains unproven while several verses are quoted without recognition of their source in the Artharatnāvali.[50] The PKS's immense popularity in contemporary south India is coupled to its being of undisputed divine origins. The long chapters on initiation and the worship of Gaṇeśa have become standard references for contemporary practice.

The PKS is undoubtedly a Kaula text given its inclusion of the makāras and elaborate description of kāmakalādhyāna but it is considered authoritative even by conservative Śrīvidyā interpreters who read it selectively.[51] Though

there is no internal evidence to suggest that it is related to the Tripurā Upaniṣad, Bhāskararāya has made it clear in his commentary on the Upaniṣad that "what is not found in one is found in the other".[52]

Rāmeśvara Sūri's nineteenth century commentary, the Saubhagyodaya, printed in the popular edition, offers a critical treatment of the text but is better known for its virulent opposition to the ritual systematization presented by Bhāskararāya's direct disciple Umānandanātha. Rāmeśvara was a south Indian Śrīvidyā initiate claiming a direct descent from Bhāskararāya through an unnamed disciple. His name curiously does not appear in any of the lineages of contemporary adepts, the majority of whom trace themselves to Bhāskararāya through Umānandanātha. His popularity among contemporary adepts arises only from his inclusion in the available printed edition.

Rāmeśvara disputes the established tradition that Bhāskararāya revised and approved Umānanda's paddhati on the grounds that it is utterly inconsistent with the Bhāskararāya's teachings. Not a point, it should be noted, lacking substance. As a result, Rāmeśvara doubts Umānanda was actually a disciple of Bhāskararāya though he offers no clues as to how this "misconception" was perpetuated. Rāmeśvara's own ideas seem dependent on Bhāskararāya and his frequently identical citations indicate a special reliance

on the *Setubandha*.[53]

Umānandanātha's *paddhati*, the *Nityotsava*, composed in 1775 C.E. enjoys nearly the same degree of popularity among contemporary adepts as the *PKS* though it lacks its divine authority.[54] Several contemporary *paddhatis* "base" their presentation on the *Nityotsava* but none appear to use the original as a literal source of liturgy. Its divergence from Bhāskararāya is usually "explained away" by contemporary adepts claiming inheritance through Umānanda. In one instance Umānanda's reference to the *vṛttatraya* as three circles surrounding the two sets of lotus petals of the *śrīcakra*---an interpretation Bhāskararāya does not accept---is interpreted as actually following Bhāskararāya's hidden intentions.[55]

Umānandanātha, like Bhāskararāya himself, is a Mahārāṣṭra Brahmin. His given name was Jagannātha Pāṇḍita and while some traditionalists claim him to be identical to the great logician of the same name this cannot be the case.[56] In addition to the *NS*, he is also known for his biography of Bhāskararāya, the *Bhāskaravilāsa*.[57] The biography's exaggerated claims, including a long list of attributed but unrecovered works, unfortunately make it an unreliable historical document.[58] Umānanda's recently recovered *Hṛdayāmṛta*, however, is a poem of outstanding merit even if only of marginal importance as a contribution

to Śrīvidyā theology.[59] The limited circulation of the published edition of this text has not brought it the notoriety among contemporary adepts it would otherwise doubtless achieve.

The dilemma of the attribution of sources to historical authors finds no better example than Bhāskararāya. This middle eighteenth century adept is unquestionably the dominant figure in contemporary Śrīvidyā tradition throughout India and yet the facts concerning his life are shrouded in the mythology of his spiritual accomplishments and culled almost entirely from Umānanda's pious biographical sketch. Like Śivānanda and other major historical figures in Śrīvidyā, Bhāskararāya was born in the south in the Vijayanāgara kingdom but received the bulk of his education in Benares. His father, Gambhīrānanda, a Ṛg Vedic Brahmin of the Viśvamitra gotra, was himself a well-known scholar of the Mahābhārata and it was he who placed Bhāskararāya under the tuition of Narasimhadhvarin so that he might learn the eighteen traditional sciences.[60] During his sojourn in Benares Bhāskararāya distinguished himself as a master of Vedic ritual and took full initiation (pūrṇābhiṣeka) into Śrīvidyā under the guru Śivadatta Śukla. Settling first on the banks of the Kṛṣṇa river at the request of his disciple Candrasena and later in the tiny hamlet of Tiruvaḻaṇkāḍu in modern Tañjhavur district, Tamil

Nāḍu, Bhāskararāya was gifted a village by the Maratha king Seforji sometime after 1756 C.E. The village on the opposite bank of the Kaveri river from Tiruvalaṇkāḍu was named (or renamed) after him, Bhāskararājapuram. The fate of this gifted property and the results of his long years of teaching are reviewed in the later discussion of the living tradition and in the introduction to the translation of his Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya in Appendix One.

In addition to the Setubanda commentary on the Vāmakeśvara Tantra (completed in 1733 or 1741 C.E.), Bhāskararāya's major contributions to Śrīvidyā are his Saubhāgyabhāskara commentary on the Lalitāsahasranāma (completed 1728), his three commentaries on sectarian Śākta Upaniṣads, viz., the Bhāvanā, Tripurā and Kaula Upaniṣads, and his short, but extremely influential independent treatise, the Varivasyarahasya, or "Secret of Worship".[61] Each of these works is a major interpretive source for contemporary Śrīvidyā tradition in south India; their influence on the historical development of the tradition in the past one hundred years is comparable only to the VT.

Bhāskararāya's works elaborate Śrīvidyā according to the vāmācāra Kaula tradition more comprehensively than any previous Śrīvidyā traditionalist. Tolerant of others and self-disciplined in his approach, he chooses to focus on texts and issues rather than become embroiled in theoretical

or sectarian disputes. It would seem, for example, impossible that he was unaware of Lakṣmīdhara's interpretation of Samayācāra and yet rather than attack this position he concentrates on the Tantras to establish the authoritativeness of Kaulism. In effect, he ignores the sectarian dispute as Lakṣmīdhara has defined it and proffers what he terms the superior interpretation. This "self-sufficient" interpretive style in which other views are considered strictly secondary to the individual lineage's exposition is characteristic of the majority of Śrīvidyā's historical commentators. Bhāskararāya's disinterest is perhaps more noteworthy because of his encyclopedic and detailed approach to the subject.

Neither arrogant nor condescending, Bhāskararāya rather exemplifies the role of secrecy within his tradition, an aspect of faith imbedded in Srīvidyā's Tantric roots. His works, like those of the majority within Śrīvidya, were composed only intending to instruct the initiated and were not designed to defend a theological agenda.

Based on initiation and secrecy and committed to the private transmission of its teachings, Śrīvidyā adepts are curiously detached from outside opinion. However, the tradition's Brahmanical influences affect deeply its self evaluation. Viewing themselves witnin the mainstreams of Hindu society and frequently referring to Vedic works and

ritual traditions, Śrīvidyā adepts make no special effort to defend or explain their tradition to "outsiders". This general unwillingness to engage in philosophical debate or discuss as a public issue the interpretation of controversial Tantric practices is part of a deliberate effort to exclude Śrīvidyā from being considered simply another theological alternative. Adepts consider all other forms of theology and ritual practice as subordinate to their secret practice: the absence of arguments for such claims of spiritual superiority only serve to reinforce the established view.

This dual-edged strategy of maintaining popular, mainstream theological and ritual concepts and yet remaining aloof from outside criticism has not always worked as successfully for other Tantrics as it has for Śrīvidyā adepts. Śrīvidyā has avoided the opprobrium cast upon some Tantrics for Kaula-influenced practices considered morally suspect (such as the use of the pañcamakāras). This is probably due to its having spread and flourished among high-caste Śaivas from a very early period. But it is undoubtedly its close knit internal structure, exemplified by historical commentators such as Bhāskararāya who ignore "outside" criticism, that contributes most to its historical continuity. Śrīvidyā adepts rarely stray from their primary mission: to transmit and interpret the tradition within

their own lineages. All other concerns are strictly secondary including any opinions expressed by one lineage about another. The lasting prosperity of the tradition is in large part due to this self-contained approach to issues and the constant attention paid to the maintenance of teachings within the teacher-student relationship. One can only conclude that Śrīvidyā's self-sufficiency and unwillingness to engage in the usual give and take of philosophical rhetoric is a purposeful attempt to stay outside the fray of public debate.

Yet unlike the majority of Tantric schools, Śrīvidyā has had a public dimension in its teachings and arguably a more visible influence on the broader spectrum of Hindu thought than any other sect of Śākta Tantrism. This is due in no small measure to the position of adepts as leaders within the larger community. Bhāskararāya is also a paradigm of this type of figure: renowned as a Vedic scholar, a master of mantraśāstra and a ritual expert, he was respected by conservative, upper-caste religious elements, favored by the ruling class and exercised such profound influence on the popular religious activities of his day that his legacy continues to affect contemporary society.

Śrīvidyā is a secret tradition inasmuch as its sophisticated theology and ritual training remains within a

closed sphere of initiates. But as intellectuals and community leaders, Śrīvidyā adepts have been deeply involved in public religious life; its proponents view their wider influence as part of a larger responsibility to Hindu society. With societal leadership came at least the appearances of the private tradition and, most evidently, the appearance of the *śrīcakra* in public forms of Saiva temple worship. Bhāskararāya, for example, is credited with the establishment of *śrīcakras* as primary objects of worship within already established Śaiva/Śākta shrines throughout south India.[62] The same is true of Saṅkarācarya. Regardless of who is personally responsibility for these individual acts, the significant point is that Śrīvidyā adepts are credited with public religious authority having visible and documented effects. In the case of the placement of the *śrīcakra*, an "unsanctioned" ritual and iconographic element appears to supercede established sources as Āgamas. As one contemporary adept noted:

> There is no scriptural source sanctioning the presence of a *śrīcakra* within a Hindu temple, or the practice of any *śrīcakra* worship. In every case what we see is that the *śrīcakra* has been put there by a saint or Śrīvidyā teacher whose own spiritual power has permitted him. People who know what is sanctioned in the Āgamas accept this unsanctioned form of worship. This is because there is no disputing that this is the highest form of the Devī and that some of the practice can be done openly. But what you see in temples is not the *śrīcakra* worship you see when it is done privately.[63]

C. Regional and Vernacular Sources of Śrīvidyā and further remarks on the concept of Authority and Scripture

Before concluding this brief historical review mention should be made of Śrīvidyā's influence on regional literature in south India. There is no better example of this than the Navāvāraṇakīrthās of Muttuswāmi Dikṣitar. These songs, composed in Sanskrit, praise various beneficent aspects of the goddess and take their name from the division of the śrīcakra into nine sub-cakras or āvāraṇas (literally, "obstacles"). As a theological source they have not had a particular influence on Srīvidyā but as part of Tamil devotionalism their importance extends far beyond the narrow circle of initiated Śrīvidyā tradition.

Contemporary adepts maintain Muttuswāmi, one of the three most famous composers of Karṇāṭik classical music, was in fact a Śrīvidyā adept and displayed a rather typical interest in other deities and forms of worship. One adept remarked:

> The songs are meant to praise and worship Devī in ways accessible to everyone. They are part of Śrīvidyā at the level of being available to all no matter how limited their qualifications for other forms of worship such as śrīcakra pūjā.[64]

While there is no historical evidence to support these claims, popular Tamil lore asserts that Muttuswāmi directed his personal devotions to the goddess. The songs themselves

are frequently heard as devotional additions to the formal prescriptions of Śrīvidyā worship. The argument, however, is not that the songs have influenced Śrīvidyā but rather that Śrīvidyā has influenced Muttuswāmi. This belief too is based only on circumstantial evidence since the songs themselves do not make further explicit mention of Śrīvidyā's particular theological components. Contemporary adepts, however, univocally agree on this relationship of Muttuswāmi to Srīvidyā and their opinions have, at least to some degree, carried into contemporary popular belief.

The bulk of regional literature in south Indian vernacular languages is either in the form of devotional songs, such as the Tamil songs of Muttuswāmi, or in the form of commentaries written to gloss major Sanskrit works. Since virtually all oral instruction in Śrīvidyā is given in local languages their role in the transmission of the tradition is significant to the study of the interpretation of literary sources and the practice of rituals. While vernacular sources have only limited regional appeal, unlike the majority of works in Sanskrit, the interpretation of Sanskrit sources, transmitted primarily through the vernaculars, depends in large measure on regional oral traditions. Without the vernacular oral tradition maintaining the vitality of the literary Sanskrit sources,

the core of Śrīvidyā teaching becomes increasingly remote and inaccessible to all but a few highly qualified initiates.[65] Though it is difficult to evaluate the influence of regional vernaculars quantitatively, the scholar of Tantrism must remain mindful of their influence on the attitudes and practices of a sect that crosses regional boundaries. Regional culture, customs, symbols and myths are part and parcel of the transmission of Śrīvidyā's Sanskrit-based tradition and if the scholar is to consider the relationship between historical sources and their regional interpretations and practices then he must also value vernacular and oral materials.

Certain Sanskrit texts, such as the Tripurārahasya (TR), have had only a regional appeal. The majority of manuscripts of the TR, for example, are in south Indian libraries and its speculations continue to form part of the transmission of Śrīvidyā in the south.[66] But such sources also reveal that texts have fallen in and out of vogue following currents within a region's historical transmission of tradition. There is no evidence, for example, that TR exercised an influence on Bhāskararāya or his eighteenth and nineteenth century disciples. Works, such as the VT and TT, have been so essential from Śrīvidyā's initial stages that their importance transcends regional factors while others, such as the TR and SRK, have exercised influence only in

certain restricted areas---in this case the south.

Numerous examples can be given of sources reflecting predominantly northern strains of Śrīvidyā, such as the Sammohana Tantra.[67] This late Tantra's origins are unknown but its influence has been felt primarily in Bengal and Kashmir and one might tentatively conclude that it was composed somewhere northern India (Bengal?).[68]

It is, of course, more common that Sanskrit sources cross regional boundaries with interpretations differing according to local factors such as custom, historical precedent and the influence of regional figures. While these influences shape the meaning and relative importance of a source within a given region, a text's fate also depends upon the traditions of particular lineages. There are cases, for example, of Śrīvidyā gurus having been influenced by particular works but not including them as part of the formal instruction of the lineage. Such sources become only tangentially important for succeeding generations and may eventually come to a point where the attributable influence is completely unknown and yet retained as part of the lineage's transmission. Particular influences derived from such tangential sources may completely pass away as generations build upon interpretations but the cumulative effect of oral transmissions and obscured sources colors each lineage's

values and practices. As we have observed, the transmission and value of particular written, historical sources depends to a large extent on the individual guru acting as final authority. Gurus have retained the right to read all forms of scripture, be they Tantras claiming a divine origin or śāstras with known historical authors, to suit their needs and to decide each disciple's case individually. Selective reading of sources and even more discriminating and selective transmission of materials remain key factors for determining the continuity of a particular lineage with the broader perspective of the sect. Final authority rests with the guru, the living embodiment of the teachings brought to spiritual fulfillment.

The general view towards scripture is not unlike the Buddhist concept of upāya in which each individual's instruction differs according to the teacher's determination of the individual's needs. But such a guru-centered view of authority must not ignore the role of historical precedents, both as they are passed through sources and in the more personal contexts of guru/disciple transmission. Śrīvidyā gurus, for example, frequently go beyond the boundaries set forth by their own teachers both in terms of textual sources and in assimilation of other influences. In this way the tradition is not limited solely to materials individual teachers choose to pass onto students and yet as a tradition

committed to particular views and interpretations works within certain self-imposed constraints. As one adept put it:

> It is our duty to go beyond what our teachers have taught, that is, to become even greater than him. But this is not an easy task. The guru is like Siva, whatever he says we are to do we must do. But this does not mean that we can do whatever he does without his permission. He may drink a caldron of hot iron to quench his thirst but what would happen to us if we followed him in this? If I study a work that my teacher has not taught me I must ask his spiritual permission and if he is no more [living] then I must ask my inner mind if it is part of our tradition. But I must never assume that what I think is tradition is important unless I receive some signal from some authority that it is acceptable. I may read anything but I can only adopt limited things.[69]

The authority of a literary or oral source for a Śrīvidyā adept depends not only on the source---whether it is considered applicable as a whole or in parts---but on whether a guru has in some measure accepted it as being within his or her lineage teachings. This entails an acknowledgement that its substance was either taught previously within the lineage or is appropriate to the lineage's interpretation. As the adept cited above points out, he is not free individually to make this decision but must respond to "tradition" as an authority, that is, he must judge a source's merits by its consistency within the history, theology and practice of his own lineage's understanding of Śrīvidyā.

Sources bearing the title Tantra are subjected to this rather complex litmus test in order to determine whether they are scripturally authoritative within a particular lineage. But certainly the single most important criterion for the determining the authority of any source (or part of a source) is guru's decision that it is applicable to a particular disciple's spiritual needs. Thus a text, such as a Tantra, may be deemed "scripture" inasmuch as it is agreed to be of divine origin, taught by Śiva or Sakti at a certain time to address specific needs, but it may not be deemed authoritative to a particular lineage or segment of tradition. Lakṣmīdhara when interpreting the Samayàcara, for example, never says that "objectionable" Kaula Tantras are not the words of Śiva nor does he imply that they lack authority for non-Samayacārins; he merely maintains that they are not relevant sources for the Samaya interpretation and do not apply Samayàcārins. He restricts the authority of scriptures by creating certain criteria of qualification---some actions, for example, twice-born caste initiates are prohibited from performing while other persons (i.e., śūdras) are not so constrained. Lakṣmīdhara's point is not necessarily to vitiate the authority of an entire category of materials belonging to the larger tradition but to impose his lineage's set of values on written and oral sources.

Thus in their selective reading Śrīvidyā gurus begin by generally accepting as "scriptural" a corpus of literature that is then determined to be relevant to the qualifications of their lineage. Kaula Śrīvidyā adepts, for example, maintain that the sources espousing the use of the pañcamakāras are of a higher order than others but do not maintain that all Kaulas are qualified to follow them. This determination is left to the guru. Lakṣmīdhara, on the other hand, rejects the pañcamakāras for Samayins and twice-born practitioners but does not exclude non-twice-borns from Samayācāra. This "selective" determination of sources as authoritative is quite different than a mere acceptance of a work as scriptural. One adept summarized the method in this way:

> As a Śakta and a Tantric I accept all the Tantras as authoritative and by that I mean that all of them have come from God. But I do not necessarily follow them. This is not different than what we do with the Vedas. I am a Yajur Vedin, I follow the Yajur Veda on certain ritual matters and for some things the Apastamba Dharmasūtra. This does not mean that I reject the Ṛg Veda or the other Vedas or that I reject other Dharmaśāstras. It only means that I follow this one, not that others are not true. The same is true of the Tantras. We follow the teaching we are taught because it is suited to us. It may not be suited to others who have been taught something else.[70]

Hence each traditional lineage defines the boundaries of its own views and leaves open the possibility that "new" teachings may find a way into the transmission. The

continuity of Śrīvidyā over the generations has undoubtedly depended on a balance between this conservation of the past and innovation in the present. The Tantric tradition's emphasis on secrecy reinforces conservative forces while at the same time enables adepts to respond dynamically to text, history and living interpreters as individuals. Certain texts and influential historical figures endure the vicissitudes of time but not without the ever changing human elements that bring tradition into practice.

Śrīvidyā has avoided becoming an historical fossil primarily because it has successfully integrated theoretical and speculative elements into practice and has accommodated change by retaining powerful links to the past. This is a result of the flexible but conservative structure of authority and the open but principled interpretation of scripture.

1. See Hacker, Paul, "Eigentümlichkeiten der Lehre und Terminologie Śaṅkaras: Avidyā, Nāmarūpa, Māyā, Īsvara," ZDMG, 1950, pp.246-286; Hacker, Paul, "Die Lehre von den Realitätsgraden im Advaita-Vedānta," ZMR., 1952, pp.277ff.; Hacker, Paul, "Śaṅkara der Yogin und Śaṅkara der Advaitin," WZKSO, 1968/1969, pp.119ff.; Hacker, Paul, "Śaṅkarācārya and Śaṅkarabhāgavatpāda," New Indian Antiquary, April-June 1947; Kunjunniraja, K., "The Date of Śaṁkarācārya and Allied Problems," Brahma Vidyā (=Adyar Library Bulletin) Vol.24, 1960, pp.125-148; Mayeda, S., "The Authenticity of the Upadeśa Sāhasrī," JAOS, 1965, No.2, pp.178-196; Mayeda, S., "On the Authenticity of the Māṇḍūkya and the Gauḍapādīya Bhāṣya," Brahma Vidyā (=Adyar Library Bulletin), 1967-1968, pp.74ff.; Mayeda, S., "The Authenticity of the Bhāgavadgītābhāṣya Ascribed to Śaṅkara," WZKSO, IX (1965), pp.155-197; Vetter, T., "Zur Bedeutung des Illusionismus bei Śaṅkara," WZKSO, 1968-1969, pp.407-423.

2. Śaṅkara is attributed at least of the latter portion of the *Saundaryalaharī* which is distinguished from the first forty-one verses, the *Ānandalaharī*, usually attributed to Siva. This matter is taken up below. On his authorship of *SL* and matters concerning the text's composition see Brown's critical edition and translation, pp.25-30: *The Saudaryalaharī or Flood of Beauty, Traditionally ascribed to Śaṅkarācārya*, ed. and trans. by W. Norman Brown. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. Appearing as Vol.43 in The Harvard Oriental Series, edited by Daniel H.H. Ingalls. Hereafter cited as Brown. On the issue of the authenticity of the works attributed to Śaṅkara and Gauḍapāda see Endnote 1 above.

3. See Brown, p.26; also Endnote 14.

4. The text has been edited in several editions. See *HTSL*, p.131, ftn.3 for a list of published editions and comments on the composition and content of the *PS*. All references are to the reprinted text cited as *PS*: *Prapañcasāra Tantra of Śaṅkarācārya with the Commentary Vivaraṇa by Padmapādācārya and Prayogakramadīpikā*---a *Vṛtti on the Vivaraṇa*, revised and documented with exhaustive Introduction by Arthur Avalon (Sir John Woodroffe) and edited by Atalananda Sarasvati, Parts I, II in One Vol. Calcutta, 1914 (as Tantrik Text Series Vol. XIX), reprinted Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass reprinted Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981.

5. *PS*, p.129ff.

6. *HTSL*, p.29f. and p.131f. The oral traditions surrounding this text may date from before the eleventh century if Sivananda, author of the *Ṛjuvimarśinī*, is placed in this period. He makes mention of the *PS* frequently in his commentary on *NSA*. See *NSA*, p.349f. and Endnote 7.

7. See *HTSL*, p.131ff.; for references to the citations made by Sivananda see Dwiveda, *NSA*, *vyākhyādvayoddhṛtaślokārdhanukramaṇi*, pp.349-360.

8. See *HTSL*, p.132 for a discussion of the commentarial literature on *PS* and also the above cited *PS* edition.

9. See Brown, p.27.

10. Cf., his *Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya*, v. 9. On the distinction between Śaṅkara and Śaṅkara Bhāgavatpāda see the article by Paul Hacker cited in Endnote 1.

11. See Karl Potter's Introduction in: *An Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophy, Vol.3, Advaita Vedānta up to Śaṅkara and his Pupils*, edited with an Introduction by Karl Potter. Reprint edition, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981. Also Brown, p.28.

12. For a summary of *Mantramahodahi* see *HTSL*, p.137. It has recently been translated also, see: *Mantramahodadhi*, trans. by a Board of Scholars. New Delhi: Sat Guru Publications, 1983.

13. For references to editions and remarks on the *Śāradātilaka* see *HTSL*, p.134f.

14. *Śrī Lalitā Triśatī Bhāṣya of Śrī Śaṁkara Bhāgavatpada*, An English Translation with Introduction by Dr. Chaganti Suryanarayana Murthy. Bombay: Bharatiya Vidyā Bhavan, 1975. On the transmission of the text see the Introduction, p.xiv.

15. *LTSB*, Introduction, pp.xiv-xv.

16. This mantra-based structure of the text also leads to long discussions of the *bījākṣara hrīṁ* since it occurs sixty times as the first component of three groups of twenty names. The quotation cited here is by "Naṭarāja" of "Guru" Mandali, Madurai, January, 1985.

17. *LTSB*, n.99, reads **paramānandarūpa muktih.** While Śaṅkara interprets the Upaniṣadic attribution of *ānanda* to Brahman (cf., *Chāndogya Upaniṣadbhāṣya*) as a matter of course, he tends to eschew this characteristic in favor of

others. In his non-dualistic system the question as to *whose* is such a bliss causes serious conceptual problems. If it is the Self (*ātman*) then does it experience *ānanda* as an object? This would undermine the Self's ultimacy by positing an "experiencer". If the *ānanda* is attributed to the conceptual self (*jīva*) then how can it be a characteristic of the supreme Brahman? Hence, Śaṅkara avoids the discussion whenever possible. Śāktas, however, like all Tantrics, lay a heavy emphasis on the *ānanda* aspect of Brahman since they wish to assert its resemblance in kind to worldly forms of happiness and stress it as a primary motivating force for practicing a spiritual discipline. Under *LTS* n.240, for example, the author of the commentary asserts that the goddess grants all gradations of bliss from human forms (*manusānanda*) to the bliss of Brahman (*brahmānanda*). See also Hacker as cited above for a discussion of the role of the term *ānanda* in Śaṅkara's works.

18. See Hacker and Mayeda cited above in Endnote 1.

19. A senior member of the "Ānanda" Mandali, Madras, February, 1985.

20. A senior member of "Gāyatrī" Mandali, Madras, February, 1985.

21. The nine commentaries are printed in a single edition that is privately published and not easily available: *Saundaryalaharī of Srī Śaṅkara Bhāgavatpādācārya with the commentaries (in Sanskrit) Lakṣmīdharā, Saubhāgyavārdhanī, Aruṇāmodinī, Ānandagirīya, Tātpāryadīpinī, Padārthacandrikā, Diṇḍima Bhāṣya, Gopālasundarī and Ānandalaharī Tīkā*. Edited and Published by A. Kuppuswami, Tiruchirapalli, India, 1976. All references to commentaries on *SL* are drawn from this edition unless otherwise specified. Another edition has drawn more scholarly reference but has been superceded by Brown. See *Saundaryalaharī of Śrī Śaṅkarācārya, with Lakṣmīdhara's Commentary, Bhāvaṇopaniṣat...and Devī Pañcastāvi*, edited by N.N. Swami Ghanapati. Mysore: Mysore Government Press, University of Mysore, Oriental Library Publications, Sanskrit Series no.11/85, 1945; third edition, revised for reprint by Pandit S. Narayanaswami Sastry, No.11/85/91, 1953.

Concerning the unpublished manuscripts see Brown. A review of manuscripts in the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library in Madras and at the Sarasvati Mahal in Thanjavur revealed that one of the commentaries, the so-called *Candrikā* attributed to the famous Appaya Dīkṣita is not a gloss on *SL* at all but a work of Vedānta. It is not likely to be an authentic work of this Advaita philosopher.

22. On Lakṣmīdhara's life, date and work see *HTSL*, p.147f.; also Brown, p.26, ftn.10.

23. Notwithstanding the work of one Rāmānanda who composed it seems commentaries on both the *Tripurā* and *Tripurātāpini Upaniṣads*. Rāmānanda follows Lakṣmīdhara's views to the letter, as it were, and frequently cites him as his source. He does not, however, contribute anything new to the Samaya view and has had no discernable influence on subsequent Srividya tradition. There is no indication of his date or reference to his work in other sources. He also appears to be almost completely unknown to contemporary adepts. Only his *Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya* is available in print (see Appendix One, Introduction for details) and at least one copy of the *Tripurātāpini Upaniṣadbhāṣya* in manuscript form in the Adyar, Library, Madras.

24. *HTSL*, p.147.

25. In contemporary traditions in south India, for example, discussion of the *SL* invariably turns to Lakṣmīdhara's interpretations. Even among professed Kaulas who disagree with Lakṣmīdhara's rejection of the *pañcamakāras*, for example, he is still held in esteem as an interpreter of the esoteric significance of the text. This is also true among a more select group who further reject his attribution of Saṅkara's authorship.

26. Another important point concerning this author's work is that his commentary on the *Āruṇa Upaniṣad* is actually not an independent work but is incorporated, verses and all, into the *SL* commentary. This has escaped the notice of the several editors that include the *Lakṣmīdharā* in their editions of *SL* as well as the editors of the Upaniṣad itself, cf., the Avalon edition of the *Kaula and other Śākta Upaniṣads*, ed. L. Sastri with an Introduction by Arthur Avalon. Calcutta: University Press, 1921. Tantrik Texts Series, Vol. X.

27. It is held by some contemporary adepts that Kaivalyāśrama does, in fact, predate Lakṣmīdhara by a century or two. This opinion is grounded, however, on unsubstantiated literary evidence and the absence of Kaivalya's mention of Lakṣmīdhara---neither of which authenticates the theory.

28. For a discussion of the thirty-six *tattvas* or categories of reality that make up reality as it emanates from Brahman see *HT*, p.52f. It should be noted that contemporary adepts cite the *PKS* (cf.,1.4) and *VVR*

(cf.,1.36) as the sources for generating lists of the tattvas. Discrepancies between various lists were not considered an important issue. This underlines the fact that strictly metaphysical matters are not given particular emphasis or laden with importance unless they bear on Śrīvidyā's spiritual discipline---a general propensity shared across Tantrism. More important to contemporary adepts was the identification of the thirty-six tattvas with the śrīcakra as the form of emanation. The tattvas themselves are important inasmuch as they are incorporated into the larger ritual picture rather than as a matter of pure metaphysical speculation.

29. A senior member of "Gāyatrī" Mandali, Madras, December, 1984.

30. See Brown edition, pp.25-30.

31. Brown, p.20.

32. A senior member of "Guru" Mandali, Madurai, June, 1985.

33. HTSL, p.168.

34. Given Goudriaan's references to early authorities it seems likely that he has not himself investigated this situation. It is at least superficially apparent that the confusion has existed because the two texts bear the same title. The Subhagodaya is not widely read and it is altogether possible that there are, in fact, two sources with two different authors.

These sources are in the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library, Madras and in the Adyar Library, both lacking proper identification numbers.

35. For editions and further information on the printed edition of the text see The Śrīvidyāratnasūtras of Gauḍapādācārya with the Dīpikā of Śaṅkarāraṇya, edited by Gopinath Kaviraj. Varanasi, 1926.

36. A senior member of "Siddha" Mandali, Madras, December, 1984.

37. On the dates of Amṛtānanda see V.V. Dwiveda, Sanskrit preface (Anupratāvikam) to Kaviraj's edition of the YH, p.5; also HTSL, p.152.

38. For editions of the KKV see HTSL, p.168. References made here refer to the Madras 1971 reprint edition: Tantrarāja Tantra and Kāmakalāvilāsa together with a

translation of parts of the commentary (Cidvalli) by Natānandanātha, edited by John Woodroffe, trans. by R. Krishnaswami Aiyar. Madras: Ganesh and Co., 1971, fourth reprint edition. Goudriaan also lists several other editions which include reference to vernacular commentaries.

39. One such recent translation into Tamil: Kāmakalāvilāsa, translated with an Introduction by N. Subrahmanya Aiyar. Madras: Guhananda Mandali Trust, 1956.

40. See HTSL, p.168-169 and ftn.22, p.169. For Bharati's remark see: Bharati, Agehananda, The Tantric Tradition. New York: Samuel Weiser, Inc., revised American paperback edition, 1975, p.75.

41. They are included in Dwiveda's edition of the NSA, pp.306-328.

42. See La Mahārthamañjarī de Madheśvarānanda avec des extraits du Parimala, traduction et introduction par Lilian Silburn. Paris: Publications de L'Institut de Civilisation Indienne, 1968, Introduction, p.9f. [Hereafter, Silburn, Mahesvarananda]

43. See Dwiveda's Sanskrit Introduction (Upodghāta) to the NSA, p.28.

44. HTSL, p.148.

45. The text is presently being edited for publication by Dr. G. Sundaramoorthy of Madurai-Kamaraj University. For details concerning its contents as well as selections from the text in translation see HTSL, p.152f.

We should reiterate, however, that Śrīnivāsa Bhaṭṭa is not the Vidyananda who authored the Artharatnāvali on NSA nor is it clear that he is the author of the Jñānadipavimarśinī simply because he bears the same initiated name as that text's author. Regarding the latter text a further study of the available manuscripts must be performed before reaching any conclusion.

46. HTSL, p.151. If this is the case then it is very curious that his disciple took upon himself the task of composing another, more elaborate paddhati covering much the same material.

47. HTSL, p.148 and p.148, ftn.41. This date seems to be based on the assumption that the author of the SRK is identical to the author of the Jñānadipavimarśinī which is quoted by Amṛtānanda in his YHDīpikā. Dr. Sundaramoorthy

who is presently editing the *SRK* has not reached a satisfactory conclusion regarding Śrīnivāsa Bhaṭṭa's date.

48. *Paraśurāmakalpasūtra with the commentary by Rāmeśvara Sūri entitled Saubhāgyodaya*, ed. by A.M. Sastri and S.Y. Dave. Baroda: M.S. University of Baroda Press, first edition, 1923, second revised edition, 1950, reprint edition, 1979. (Gaekwad's Oriental Series, no.22)

49. Paraśurāma is mythologically connected to Kerela. See *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, 9.15.16ff.

50. *HTSL*, p.150; also see *NSA* edition, pp.349-360.

51. For further details on the selective reading and interpretation of Śrīvidyā sources by contemporary adepts see Part Two.

52. *Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya*, v.15.

53. Both, for example, make use of a text known only by name, the so-called *Saṅketapaddhati*. It just so happens, however, that all of Rāmeśvara's citations appear in Bhāskararāya's works even when the latter does not acknowledge this work as the source.

54. *Nityotsava* by Umānandanātha, edited by A.M. Sastri. Baroda: M.S. University of Baroda Press, 1923, revised edition by Swami Trivikrama Tirtha, 1948. (Gaekwad's Oriental Series, no.23)

55. This interpretation making Umānanda consistent with Bhāskararāya is plausible but not likely. How then do we explain this discrepancy considering the strong stand Bhāskararāya took on the issue? One possibility is that Bhāskararāya actually taught this tradition to Umānanda for the sake of continuity with the majority view. According to the contemporary adepts, Bhāskararāya actually belonged to the so-called Ānandabhairava *sampradāya* which admits the *vrttatraya* as the three outer circles but prescribes no *pūja* for them. This seems contrary to Bhāskararāya's stated position (cf., *Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāsya*, v.4) which would suggest that he follows the Hayagrīva *sampradāya* and does not accept the presence of the outside three circles. Another possibility is that Rāmeśvara is actually correct, that is, that Bhāskararāya did not revise the *Nityotsava*. That Umānanda was not his disciple, however, goes against all traditions but is not out of the realm of possibilities. Further investigations into the situation with Bhāskararāya's familial descendants suggest that Umānanda

was his actual disciple but that he may or may not have taught this concept to his trusted disciple. See Part Two for details of the interviews conducted with the lineages claiming Bhāskararāya's spiritual inheritance.

56. Neither is he to be confused with the Jagannātha who composed religious poetry in Hindi though this is not an identification made in Śrīvidyā literature.

57. Printed in the edition: *Lalitāsahasranā rotra with the Saubhāgyabhāskara of Bhāskararāya*, edited by M.K. Sastri. Bombay: Nirnaya Sagara Press, 1921.

58. The *Bhāskaravilāsa* cites, for example, a commentary on the *PKS* attributed to Bhāskararāya entitled the *Ratnāloka*. It seems unlikely that this text ever existed except in name since it has gone completely unnoticed by Rāmeśvara (whose commentary on *PKS* is quite complete in respect to references) and is not known at all in contemporary traditions. Cf., remarks by S. Subrahmanya Sastri in his Introduction to the *VVR*, pp.xxx-xxxiv.

59. *The Hrdayāmrta of Umānandanātha*, edited by A. Sastri. Hyderabad, A.P., India: Ananda Trust, 1981.

60. See the Introduction to the *VVR*, p.xxii.

61. For a list editions of the *VVR* see *HTSL*, p.170, ftn.28. All references here refer to: *Varivasyārahasya and its commentary Prakāśa by Śrī Bhāskararāya Makhin, edited with English translation* by Pandit S. Subrahmanya Sastri. Adyar: The Adyar Library and Research Centre, first edition 1934, fourth edition 1976. All references are to the fourth edition.

For a more complete discussion of the chronology of Bhāskararāya's work and especially the Upaniṣad commentaries see the Introduction to Appendix One.

62. In one case mentioned in the *Bhāskaravilāsa* it is noted that Bhāskararaya had a temple to his family deity, the goddess Candrālambā, constructed in the form of a *śrīcakra*. In his renovation of the temple of Bhāskareśvara in Bhāskararājapuram, according to contemporary authorities, he established a *śrīcakra*. Śaṅkarācārya is credited with establishing a number of *śrīcakras* both for the first time and within already established temples such as famous shrine of Kāmākṣī in Kāñcipuram. While there may be some truth to the claims surrounding Bhāskararāya, if there was a Śaṅkarācārya involved in the latter cases we can be certain that it was not the so-called *Ādiśaṅkara* of the eighth

century. The possibility that it was *a* Śaṅkarācārya still exists since all the heads of the *maṭhas* of the Śaṅkara tradition bear this name as a title. The same can be said of the written sources attributed to Śaṅkara on Śrīvidyā and Śākta topics. How an ascetic has been credited with this involvement of establishing an icon within a temple is yet another issue.

63. A senior member of "Guru" Mandali, Madurai, April, 1985.

64. A senior female member of "Gāyatrī" Mandali, Madurai, November, 1984.

65. This is, in fact, the case. Within the living lineages of adepts in south India one finds only one or two individuals with enough training in Sanskrit to read original sources. The situation is further complicated by the inaccessibility of printed editions and the breakdown of the traditional system of passing manuscripts on within lineages. These and other issues are taken up in Part Two.

66. For the details concerning the *Tripurārahasya* see *HTSL*, p.166f. The well-known sage of Tīruvanamalaī, the late Rāmana Mahārṣi, for example, was so influenced by the *TR* that the authorities of his *Āśrama* trust have seen fit to publish an English translation of the work. Rāmana, they maintain, was a Śrīvidyā worshipper (though there is no direct evidence in his sayings to confirm this) and following his personal instructions a *śrīcakra* was installed within the shrine dedicated to Devī on the *Āśrama* grounds.

67. This text is later incorporated into the *SST* as its fourth *khaṇḍa*, see *HTSL*, p.68f.

68. Cf., *HTSL*, p.23; *HT*, p.43. Bharati has contended that *SST* has had a significant impact throughout India though he presents no evidence to support this claim; see Bharati, p.75.

69. "Naṭarāja" of "Guru" Mandali, Madurai, April, 1985.

70. A senior member of the "Guru" Mandali, Madurai, March, 1985.

Part One
Chapter Five
The Beneficent Goddess Lalitā Mahātripurasundarī: The Sthūla Aspect

Śrīvidyā sources maintain that Śakti in her supreme aspect manifests as the benign (saumya), motherly and beautiful Goddess. This figure contrasts sharply with the terrifying forms in the familiar images of Kālī and Durgā. As the consort of Śiva the beneficent goddess is known most conspicously by the names Lalitā, Tripurā/Tripurasundarī, Śrī and Lakṣmī. As Lalitā and Tripurasundarī her quasi-independence from Śiva and superiority over other feminine aspects is emphasized; in the case of the names Śri and Lakṣmī, her association with Viṣṇu as his consort is consdiered secondary. Contemporary Śrīvidyā adepts prefer to call the goddess "ŚrīdevI" in order to distinguish their position from certain Vaiṣṇava theological schools in which Viṣṇu alone is considered the highest form of divinity and Śakti is consigned to subordinate role. But like Śrī and Lakṣmī in Vaiṣṇava tradition, Lalitā too exhibits the qualities that exemplify the ideals of classical Hindu womanhood. While Śakti maintains the dominant theological position in the Śākta theology, she simultaneously in the position of the dutiful and obedient wife of Śiva, that is, the sumaṅgalī who fulfills both domestic and social roles. She is called saubhāgya, the "prosperous" or the

"bountiful", because from this idealized perspective she is complete in her roles as wife and mother and as such is the deity who confers the blessings of prosperity.

Śākta Tantra sources describe the anthropomorphic mother goddess as the physcial or "gross" aspect (*sthūla*) that accompanies the more subtle (*sūkṣma*) mantric and transcendent (*parā*) yantric forms. The anthropomorphic goddess is the primary focus of loving devotion (*bhakti*) and the goddess's most universally recognized and "accessible" aspect. Lalitā's physical description and beneficent character are identified with localized goddesses bearing comparable attributes. In her physical form, it is said, any Hindu can approach her since this aspect is not ordinarily restricted to the specially qualified. Those qualities and attributes that Lalitā Tripurasundarī represents as a Tantric deity are best described in the works of Śrīvidyā's foremost historical exponents.

Rāmeśvara in his commentary on *PKS*, 1.5. says that the *sthūla* aspect is known through the *dhyānaślokas* which describe her and form the basis for meditation.[1] These "verses for meditation" appear commonly in ritual manuals and mantric digests (*paddhatis* and *nibandhas*). They not only describe the physical features of the goddess but further distinguish Lalitā's youthful aspect (*bāla*) from the mature form (*saubhāgya*) that lies at the center of Śrīvidyā

worship.

The youthful Bālātripurasundarī is a subordinate aspect of the mature Lalitā. She is worshipped almost exclusively in her mantric aspect as preparation for the "higher" and more subtle forms of Saubhāgyatripurasundarī or Mahātripurasundarī. In other words, Tripurasundarī's youthful aspect in a physical form is not an object of devotion apart from the worship of the mature image. Adepts also consider Bālā as a subordinate aspect within a mantric hierarchy of qualification (adhikāra) in which she is part of the larger scheme of ritual contemplation (upāsana). The figure of Bālā is rarely depicted in the physical form (sthūla) and in the mantric form appears to be known only to a select group of Śāktas, particularly to Śrīvidyā adepts. Though youthful and virginal aspects of the goddess are well-known in Śākta tradition, in Śrīvidyā this form of the goddess is considered strictly an "introductory" aspect; only the mature image recieves the attention of traditional historical commentators.

A dearth of historical evidence precludes dating the emergence of the names Lalitā or Tripurā but it appears safe to assume they were known before the development of the corresponding mantric and yantric aspects.[2] Lalitā, as a name of the beneficent goddess, appears in the early Purāṇas and in special connection with pilgrimages made to her

shrine in the city of Prayāg.[3] From these sources we may conclude that the name Lalitā was popular throughout India by no latter than the sixth century.[4] When the name Lalitā and the depiction of this goddess in her familiar form are identified with the supreme Śakti is not as certain; the origins of the name also remains obscure.

In Śrīvidyā tradition, Lalitā Tripurasundarī is described in a dhyānaśloka that, with minor variations, is common to both historical and contemporary sources. Before undertaking any form of worship on the anthropomorphic (sthūla) Lalitā, the adept recites the following verse:

> I contemplate the Goddess who is red [in color or dress and] bears [in her four hands] the noose, the goad, the flower arrows and the bow [of sugarcane], [She who] with [her] lustre envelops the [twelve siddhis] beginning with the power to be minute.[5]

This dhyānaśloka, and others comparable, are the standard references for Lalitā Mahātripurasundarī's sthūla aspect. Occuring in the practical ritual digests (paddhatis and nibandhas) this description agrees with the more elaborate picture drawn in the opening sections of the Lalitāsahasranāma (LSN).[6]

In the LSN, Lalitā is depicted as seated on the lion's throne like a great queen (vs.2-3) having emerged from the alter of the fire of consciousness (v.4). Manifesting herself to fulfill the wishes of the gods (v.5) and shining

like a thousand suns (v.6) she has four arms and holds in her hands the noose of desire (vs.7-8), the elephant goad of wrath and worldly knowledge (v.9), the sugarcane bow of the mind (v.10) and the arrows of the five essences (*tanmātras*) (v.11). She bathes the universe in her rosy complexion (v.12), wearing flowers in her hair and a crown of jewels (vs.13-14). She bears the auspicious mark of marriage and is modest in her demeanor (vs.16-25); her thin waist is burdened by her heavy breasts (vs.36) and the Lord of Desire is drowned in the fullness of her smile (v.28); she is dressed in red adorned with a belt of jewelled bells and the crescent moon glimmering above her crown (vs.29-51). The text then lists remaining attributes that complete the picture of Lalitā's supremacy over the other divinities and the superiority of her worship.

In contemporary depictions the *śrīcakra* is often placed at Lalitā's feet in a fashion similar to Kāmākṣī of Kāñcipuram, the localized figure most directly resembling this anthropomorphic image. The focus of Lalitā's relationship to localized goddesses, however, is not merely in her physical resemblences or similar disposition but in a relationship with the *śrīcakra*. Each localized form retains its own particular anthropomorphic characteristics, mythology and often has its own *dhyānaśloka*; yet each is identified with the *śrīcakra*. Lalitā is the paradigm of the

beneficent goddess encompassing all these various identities and Bhāskararāya does not hesitate to identify certain names in the LSN with localized goddesses, especially the southern deities Kāmākṣī of Kāñcipuram and Śivakāmasundarī, the consort of Naṭarāja in Cidambaram.[7] In southern India there are no major temples in which Śakti is specifically called Lalitā or Tripurasundarī but this does not suggest that either of these names are wanting in familiarity or that a relationship to other beneficent aspects is lacking.[8]

Lalitā's worship is obviously not restricted to Śrīvidyā adepts nor is the ritual and devotional uses of the LSN. The worship of Lalitā and the recital of her thousand names is a common feature Śākta traditions in all regions of India. Generally speaking, Lalitā is considered the kuladevatā or family deity of the Śrīvidyā tradition and often the iṣṭadevatā or chosen deity of individual Śrīvidyā adepts. Within the families of adepts another deity may be considered the kuladevatā but insofar as an adept belongs to Śrīvidyā the kula deity is Lalitā Tripurasundarī. In addition, while an adept may chose a localized aspect of Śakti as his or her own iṣṭadevatā there is no disputing an intrinsic identity with Lalitā Tripurasundarī.

Lalitā's exoteric anthropomorphic image acquires esoteric significance within Śrīvidyā. Esoteric meanings are given to many of the LSN's thousand names while "Lalitā"

and "Tripurā" are themselves subjects of speculation. Exoteric figures serve as images associated with external ritual and contemplation (*bahirpūjā* or *bahiryāga*) while esoteric meanings are forms for internal contemplation (*antaryāga*). There is little doubt that Lalitā and Tripurā represent the same goddess but in the internalized, esoteric sense each respective name distinguishes different attributes and is explained separately. Bhāskararāya spares no effort in drawing manifold significances to individual names while attributing different levels of meaning.

Lalitā is the less complex of the two common names. At the outset of the *LSN* Bhāskararāya explains why this particular goddess is the Great Śakti (*mahāśakti*) and the supreme deity (*parādevatā*); she is not to be confused with lesser forms or even with other subordinate goddesses bearing the name Lalitā. He says:

> *Lalitā*: lit. one who plays...Above Śakti and Śiva, *there* exist manifestations of Parāśakti and of Sadāśiva; each has its own grades and spheres; but Mahāśakti, which is the same as Parāśiva, crossing all worlds, has her residence in that supreme sphere called Mahā-kailāsa, Aparājita, etc. Her body is formed of pure and concentrated *sattva* without any admixture of *rajas* and *tamas*; *whereas* the other *śaktis* merely have a preponderance of the *sattva* over the other two (*rajas* and *tamas*) and not pure *sattva*. Hence she *is the* highest, the prototype of Parabrahman. There are many secret manifestations of this Goddess, but in this work that particular manifestation termed Kāmeśvarī and known as Lalitā is referred to.[9]

The TT devotes nearly three chapters (chs.4 to 6) to the worship of Lalitā as one of the Nityās (see below) but this involves neither the internalized contemplation of the name nor the supreme Śakti identified with the Śrīvidyā mantra or śrīcakra: it can be supposed that this is 'another' Lalitā and not the ultimate or Parāśakti. Other gods in their respective "supreme" aspects are identified with Lalitā. The fourth or Chinnamastākhaṇḍa of the SST identifies Kṛṣṇa with Lalitā, and Rāma as Śiva. Both of these identifications are common to contemporary southern adepts.[10]

Rāmeśvara (PKS, 3.1), with Bhāskararāya's comment on LSN, n.1000 (Lalitāmbikā) in mind, quotes the same passage from Padmapurāṇa as his spiritual mentor in order to provide an esoteric etymology for the name Lalitā. He says:

> The explanation in the Padmapurāṇa is "transcending the worlds (lokanātītya) she sports (lalate) and therefore is called Lalitā."[11]

He continues to explain that Bhāskararāya says Lalitā means the goddess is the imagined embodiment of śṛṅgārabhava, the sentiment of erotic love, which, he says is the foremost of the aesthetic qualities (rasa) of poetic expression (dhvāni).[12] Bhāskararāya, however, takes this to be less important than the relationship of the name Lalitā to the five preceding names. These five names support the view that Lalitā is the supreme form of divinity. He says:

> Thus...the goddess is indicated as the creator, preserver, and destroyer of the universe, ...she is indicated as possessing two other functions, namely annihilation and re-manifestation which belong to no other deity...the same deity who possesses these five functions is described in different ways and is indicated by the name Lalita which is her special name and belongs to no other deity.[13]

Regarding the *Padmapurāṇa*'s etymology cited above Bhāskararāya glosses it by saying:

> "Worlds" means her surrounding lights or deities. "Transcending" being above their abodes in the *bindu*-place. "Sports" shines brilliantly. The wise say, "The word *lalitā* has eight meanings, namely brilliancy, manifestation, sweetness, depth, fixity, energy, grace and generosity; these are the eight human qualities." The *Kāma-śāstra* says: *Lalitā* means erotic actions and also tenderness; as she has all the above-mentioned qualities, she is called Lalitā. It is said also, "Thou art rightly called Laḷitā for thou hast nine divine attendents [in the Śrīcakra] and your bow is made of sugar-cane, your arrows are flowers, and everything connected with you is lovely (*lalitā*)." The word *lalitā* according to the *Sabdārṇava* means beautiful.[14]

The esoteric meanings of the name Tripurā are considerably more complex since the literal "three cities" suggests the myriad of symbolic triads that abound in Hindu lore as well as those specific to Śākta and Śrīvidyā speculations. These triads can be categorized into three distinct types of speculation though they do, in fact, overlap and converge in the works of the traditional commentators. The typology clarifies the levels of symbolism associated with each name. The task of the

Śrīvidyā adept is to enact externally in ritual and thereby realize internally the meaning of the symbolic triads in their explicit and suggestive senses. "Tripurā" is the key to this process, the focus of ritual and contemplative devotions both as an image and a name conveying an esoteric sense.

(1) Mythological: The mythological is the initial level of instruction explaining the physical form (sthūla-rūpa) of Tripurā, her characteristics and relationship to the cosmos and other deities. The most common association with the term Tripurā is the popular Purāṇic story of the fortress of demons destroyed by Śiva. Though a favorite myth among Tantrics, the tale is not associated with the cultic worship of Tripurā identified with the Śrīvidya mantra and Śrīcakra.[15]

Taking the meaning more literally, as the "Three Cities", however, no Śrīvidyā commentator misses the opportunity to identify Tripurā with the trimurti, Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva. Bhāskararāya remarks on LSN, n.626 (Tripurā), "...Devī is called Tripurā because she is older than the three persons (Brahma, Viṣṇu and Rudra)."[16] Rāmeśvara on PKS, 10.83 makes a similar comment saying, "[She] is eternal, that is, ancient (purā), occuring before the three, creation, maintenence and dissolution."[17]

Quoting the Laghustava Bhāskararāya encapsulates the host of symbolic triads identified with Tripurā:

> There are three Devas, three Vedas, three fires, three energies, three notes (svaras), three worlds, three abodes, (or according to another reading, three cities, three sacred lakes, three castes, namely brāhmana, etc. Whatever in the world is threefold, such as the three objects of human desire, all these, O divine one, really belong to your name.[18]

Bhāskararāya on LSN, n.997 (śrīmattripurasundarī) refers to the goddess as the consort of the male Tripurasundara, that is, Parāśiva, the Supreme Śiva. He is called Tripurā, Bhāskararāya says, "...because the three, Brahma, Viṣṇu and Rudra are his body."[19] He goes on to quote Kālikāpurāṇa:

> By the will of the pradhāna the body of Śiva became triple. Then the upper part of Maheśvara became Brahma with five faces, four arms, and whose body had the colour of the pericarp of the lotus. His middle part became Viṣṇu of the blue colour, having one face, four arms, bearing the conch, disc, club and lotus. The lower part became Rudra having five faces, four arms and the colour of a white cloud and the moon as a crest jewel. As these three Pūras are in him, he is called Tripura.[20]

(2) Cosmological/Epistemological: Mythological references gain cosmological and epistemological significance in Śrīvidyā's intellectualization of imagery. The epistemological meaning of Tripurā is perhaps best summarized by Bhāskararāya's succinct comment on LSN, n.234

(mahātripurasundarī). He says that she is called Tripurā because she is, "the measurer, the measuring and the thing measured" or more directly, the knower, knowing and object of knowledge.[21] Śivānanda (Ṛjuvimarśinī on the NSA, 1.12) quotes Prapañcasāra 9.2 to the effect that she called Tripurā not only because she has the three forms (of Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva) and is the three creations (heavens, earth and underworlds) but because she has the nature of Śiva, Śakti and Ātman.[22] This series of identifications links Tripurā with all creation, in both latent and manifest forms, and completes the non-dualistic identity of the Absolute Brahman with the individual soul (ātman). Thus Tripurā is identified not only as knowledge itself but as the process of obtaining knowledge. She is identical to the all the components of a valid cognition and hence with the cognizer, cognized and cognizing.

The symbolic triads associated with Tripurā do not merely relate the epistemological process to creation but are part of a deliberate pattern that leads the aspirant to the realization that correct understanding is identical with the source of reality. To know reality is to become it; and in this realization there is nothing "new". As Bhāskararāya says:

> ...Devī is the means to attain one's own real nature. The meaning is that Mokṣa is the attainment of one's own real nature....the jīvas which were before Brahman, became embodied through

> the influence of nescience; when he has got rid of that influence, he has no longer any body and becomes one with Brahman.[23]

According to Śrīvidyā the soteriological process is a reintegration: by knowing how creation has come about materially in the form of the three guṇas and as being, consciousness and bliss (cf., Ṛjuvimarśinī, 1.12), it is possible to reverse the process, that is, to return to the source of being through diligent spiritual discipline (sādhana).

Bhāskararāya goes one step further towards completing the ontological identification of Tripurā with the manifest universe by bringing the śrīcakra into the discussion. He identifies Tripurà with the śrīcakra as a triadic symbol of the cosmos and divides the soteriological path divided into three sets. In his introductory remarks to the commentary on Tripurā Upaniṣad he condenses the five levels of realization that define liberation into a set of three paths that are in turn identified with the 'Three Cities'. He says:

> There are five types of liberation...Among these [five] the first and the last are one path (mārga) each and the middle group of three are another path...
>
> Because there are three paths the cities...are understood to be three. Because [She] pervades the three cities, fills [them] and is in the form of them, the Supreme Deity is called Tripurā... This fivefold division [of

> liberation] into three [paths] explains the attainment of the Goddess.[24]

He goes on to say:

> That [initial] modification [of the One into Three] is [technically] called *śānta* [literally, peaceful] because it is the aggregate form of desire, knowledge and action. It [insofar as She is identified with Brahman] is called transcendent (*parā*) because it is the aggregate form of the [primordial sound as it emanates, technically called] *paśyantī*, *madhyamā* and *vaikharī*. ...She is the aggregate form of [the three consorts of Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva and their respective powers, namely] Vāmā, Jyeṣṭhā and Raudrī.[25]

Triadic symbolism is essential to completing the identification of the anthropomorphic Tripurā with the transcendent (*parā*) *śrīcakra* and to linking the creation of the universe with the path to individual reintegration. After describing how creation emanates from the one, represented by the *bindu* on the *śrīcakra*, and becomes "threes" (such as the three *guṇas*), represented by the expanding sets of triangles, each manifesting more explicit and recognizable forms of reality, Bhāskararāya summarizes the identification of Tripurā and *śrīcakra* by quoting *Kālikāpurāṇa*.

> Her *maṇḍala* consists of triangles (*trikoṇa*), the outer gates (*bhūpura*) consist of three lines; Her mantra also is said to consist of three syllables [or three groups of syllables] and similarly She has a threefold form. *Kuṇḍalinī* śakti is threefold and there are three deities in creation. Because everything [connected with her] is three, She is called Tripurā.[26]

Understanding these various levels of esoteric meaning would infer that the aspirant has not only properly conceptualized creation but knows the discipline that leads to its realization; like Tripurā and the śrīcakra, the path itself is conceptualized as threefold. Bhāskararāya provides a characteristic example in the Purāṇa quotation of a Śrīvidyā philosopher linking cosmological speculation with practical forms of spiritual discipline. Theological or speculative efforts are enacted ritually beginning with anthropomorphic forms and eventually culminating with the śrīcakra. The adept, recognizing that the cognitive process is itself a manifestation of Tripurā sets out on the three-staged soteriological path and ascends by means of identifying with the cosmological form of the śrīcakra---composed of sets of triangles. The ritual identification of Tripurā with the śrīcakra is central to the process of reintegrating consciousness in dualistic reality (represented in by the symbolic triad of the "Three Cities") with its non-dual source (represented by the bindu at the center of the śrīcakra).

(3) Yogic: The full implications of these patterns of intellectual identification are seen only when Tripurā is linked to yogic practice and ritual enactment. Bhāskararāya (LSN, n.626) quoting the Tripurārṇavatantra identifies

Tripurā with the three basic *nāḍīs* or subtle channels that, according to the theories of *kuṇḍalinī* yoga, control the passage of the breaths.[27] The bodily cakras described in *kuṇḍalinī* yoga are systematically identified with the sub-cakras of the *śrīcakra*. These provide the link between the yogic process within the human body and the essentially triadic *śrīcakra* identified with both the body and the universe.

Śrīvidyā's historical commentators have elaborately demonstrated the coherence of Tripurā's symbolic triads and their relation to the *kuṇḍalinī* yoga traditions inherited by Śāktism. The esoteric meanings of the goddess's names remain a key element for bringing symbolic imagery into forms of ritual and yogic practice. In this respect Śrīvidyā also typifies a major principle of Tantric traditions: theological and speculative views are devised specifically for practical purposes. The physical (*sthūla*) aspect of the goddess in both name and form remains an indispensible component for all Śrīvidyā devotees since it bridges exoteric and estoeric traditions. While the physical form of Tripurā is worshipped by initiated and uninitiated alike, Bhāskararāya in his closing remarks on the *LSN* declares that the goddess's names themselves are a great secret and that, "...the practice of Śrīvidyā, the worship of Śrīcakra and the repetition of this holy

Sahasranāman are not attainable by a slight penance."[28] One can conclude that Bhāskararāya meant not only initiates into Śrīvidyā but all who worship these forms of the goddess.

1. *PKS*, 1.5, p.26.

2. Textual references to the names Lalitā and Tripurā first occur in the Purāṇas and may harken back to an ancient tradition. There is, however, no substantive historical evidence to support these traditional claims. The name "Tripurā" as the city destroyed by Śiva appears to be distinct from the goddess in her threefold aspects; connections between the two seem coincidental. It also appears clear that while Śrīvidyā adepts may not have "created" the concepts and values surrounding these images, they have significantly contributed to their popular imagery and understanding. There is no suggestion in any Śrīvidyā text that other images or aspects of the goddess provided a more central focus or fertile ground for theological speculation.

3. See Sircar, D.C., *The Śākta Pīṭhas*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, reprint, second edition, 1973, p.13. References also occur in Śrīvidyā commentaries, cf., Bhāskararāya's remarks on *Tripurā Upaniṣad*, v.6, (the unidentified quotation of *Padmapurāṇa*) with reference to the pilgrimage center of Prayāg as associated with Lalitā.

4. The reference to Lalitā in Tirumūlar's *Tirumantiram* confirms this view. See the previous section for details.

5. **aruṇām karuṇātaraṅgitākṣīm dhṛtapāśāṅkuśapuṣpabāṇacāpām/ aṇimādhibhirāvṛtām mayūkhairahamityeva vibhāvaye bhavānīm//** This verse appears in a number of oral sources but is also preserved in nearly every ritual handbook within Śrīvidyā, see "Aṇṇā's" *Mantravidānam* for one such reference.

6. *LSN*, n.1-52. This work's impact on both historical and contemporary Śrīvidyā traditions cannot be underestimated. It is the most widely read and easily available Śrīvidyā source in modern south India. Taken apart from Bhāskararāya's commentary, the *Saubhāgyabhāskara*, the *LSN* presents a wholly coherent picture of the beneficent goddess and her multivarious qualities and attributes. With Bhāskararāya's interpretation, it takes on new dimensions, interpreted with his characteristic depth and attention to esoteric detail. The anthropomorphic figure emerging from the description in names one to fifty-two in the *Lalitāsahasranāma* is the most familiar and complete image of Lalitā's *saubhāgya* aspect.

7. Cf., *LSN*, n.734 (*naṭeśvarī*). Bhāskararāya clearly identifies the goddess as the cosort of Cidambaram Naṭarāja.

8. The particular identification of the goddess depicted in the Lalitāsahasranāma with localized forms is a subject of further enquiry in the study of living Śrīvidyā tradition in Part Two.

9. LSN, I.1, Saubhāgyabhāskara. Sastry, pp.7-8.

10. Śaktisaṃgamatantra, 4.9.1ff.

11. PKS, 3.1, p.87.

12. PKS, 3.1., p.87.

13. LSN, n.1000. Sastry, p.373.

14. LSN, n.1000. Sastry, pp.373-374.

15. See HT,p.66.

16. Sastry, p.254.

17. PKS, 10.83, p.306.

18. LSN, n.626. Sastry, p.254.

19. Sastry, p.372.

20. Sastry, p.372.

21. LSN, n.234. Sastry, p.129.

22. NSA, 1.12., p.33; cf.,PS, 9.2., p.128, Avalon edition.

23. LSN,n.84, Sastry,pp.84-85.

24. See Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya, v.1.

25. Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya, v.1.

26. Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya, v.1.

27. Sastry, p.254.

28. Sastry, p.399 and p.400.

Part One
Chapter Six
The Śrīvidyā Mantra: *śrīvidyā*

A. The Subtle Aspect of Devī

> The one who repeats the fifteen-syllable mantra of Tripurā attains all desires, all enjoyments, conquers all the worlds, causes all words to emerge; achieving identity with Rudra, one breaks through the veil of Viṣṇu and obtains the supreme Brahman.[1]

Śrīvidyā tradition has laid more emphasis on its mantric teachings than on any other form of contemplative worship, including the anthropomorphic Lalitā and the *śrīcakra*. This is apparent not only by the number of works devoted to mantra exposition but in the way Śrīvidyā has developed its identity as a tradition. The heart of Śrīvidyā is initiation into the mantric hierarchy: the core of ritual contemplation is repetition (*japa*) of the root-mantra (*mūlamantra*) of Lalitā. That the tradition takes its name from the mantra is indicative of the major role it plays in metaphysics and practice.

The term *śrīvidyā* is interpreted variously as a grammatical compound. Śrīvidyā is the *vidyā* of Śrī, that is, the wisdom or knowledge of the goddess (*Śrī*) who embodies the auspicious (*śrī*).[2] It is both the knowledge that liberates (*vidyā*) and the wisdom that terms leads to material prosperity (*śrī*). Śrīvidyā traditionalists take both senses concurrently; that which forms the substance of

prosperity and auspiciousness is the goddess who bestows them.

In Mantraśāstra literature, including the Śākta Tantras, the term vidyā, knowledge, also means mantra, especially mantras of female deities. The mantra is the primary revelation of the wisdom that provides both worldly and soteriological insight, it is not merely a symbol of it. Jan Gonda, in "The Indian Mantra" observes:

> The essence of a mantra...is the presence of the deity: only that mantra in which the devata has revealed his or her aspects can reveal that aspect. The deity is believed to appear from the mantra when it is correctly pronounced.[3]

In a more traditional explanation Bhaskararaya etymologizes, "Mantra is pure thought, because it has the quality of protecting (√tra) the person during meditation."[4] This etymology is common to nearly every Indian writer on the subject.[5] Bhāskararāya makes a further subtle distinction is his opening remarks on the LSN where he says:

> The difference between Mantra and Vidyā is that the former has reference to male deities and the latter to female ones. To show the identity of Śiva with Śakti, the word vidyā is...used along with the word mantra.[6]

The distinction here is one of gender, the feminine word vidyā being associated with female deities. But throughout his works Bhāskararāya, like other historical interpreters, refers to the śrīvidyā as a both a vidyā and a

mantra, the former term preferred for its philosophical suggestiveness as well as its gender.

Many traditions claim the superiority of particular mantras just as they do for their own chosen deity (iṣṭadevata).7 Bhāskararāya summarizes the position of the Śrīvidyā adepts most succinctly:

> 'Śrīvidyā is the best of mantras'...°He who regards as equal to the other [Vidyās] with the Vidyā of Lalitā, also this mantra with other mantras...that man is only bewildered in mind.8

B. Historical and Mythical Derivations of the Śrīvidyā

Śrīvidyā identifies itself not only through its practice of a distinctive principal mantra (mūlamantra) but as a tradition interpreting all aspects of mantraśāstra. Śrīvidyā adepts both historically and in contemporary practice have achieved notoriety beyond the sectarian boundaries of Śāktism for their knowledge of these esoteric matters.9 The ability to use, interpret and distribute mantras has made Śrīvidyā adepts important religious functionaries in the wider Hindu religious society. It is not uncommon, for example, for contemporary Śrīvidyā adepts to initiate individuals seeking worldly or spiritual guidance into all sorts of mantras and practices other than those distinctive to Śrīvidyā tradition. As a result of their mantra expertise, they have also achieved a reputation for astrology, clairvoyance and even miraculous power, all

related to their ability to handle mantras and especially the "*vidyā* of *vidyās*, the *śrīvidyā*."[10] Contemporary adepts usually trace their general mantra knowledge to their Śrīvidyā practice. As one put it:

> When a person has accomplishment (*siddhi*) in Śrīvidyā, then all matters become under his control. This enables him to help others. His *siddhi* in other mantras and practices is merely a by-product of his mastery of the *śrīvidyā* that comes through the grace of Devī and the guru.[11]

It is the mantra of the goddess known as *pañcadaśākṣarī* or *ṣoḍaśākṣarī*, respectively "fifteen-" or "sixteen syllables" that is the principal or root-mantra (*mūlamantra*) and the center of Śrīvidyā's contemplative, yogic and ritual practices. The tradition debates the superiority of the sixteen syllable form over the fifteen as well as how the mantra is shaped within different lineages. The distinction between the fifteen and sixteen syllable configurations is best understood distinct from the traditions maintaining different versions of the mantra itself. While the debate over the fifteen and sixteen syllable forms is complex, the *śrīvidyā*'s variations according to different lineage traditions are comparatively simple.

Śrīvidyā tradition purports to have twelve different versions of the root-mantra each associated with one of twelve sages or demi-gods who brought it into the earthly

realm. This mythological, or perhaps even quasi-historical, account is consistent in its enumeration of the "revealing" figures and their versions of the mantra. The most complete exposition of the śrīvidyā's twelve versions is in the Tripurātāpinī Upaniṣad though this is not the only one.[12] LSN, n.238 (manuvidyā), is the name which prompts Bhāskararāya to list the twelve. He remarks:

> The Śrīvidyā is of twelve kinds differentiated according to the twelve devotees, "Manu, Candra, Kubera, Lopamudrā, Manmatha, Agastya, Agni, Sūrya, Indra, Skanda, Śiva and Krodhabhaṭṭāraka [Durvāsa]. These are the devotees of Devī."[13]

Of these twelve forms of the mantra only two appear to have a major historical role in the tradition, the other ten do not appear to have been part of actual transmissions.

Historically, the most important version of the mantra is attributed to the aspect of Śiva called Manmatha and more frequently referred to as Kāmeśvara. The other version of the mantra with an historical, practical base is attributed to Lopamudrā, wife of the sage Agastya (himself attributed one of the vidyās), and a major interlocutor in Śrīvidyā tradition, especially in the transmission of the LSN.[14] The historical position of the other ten vidyās and figures is difficult to evaluate. With only theoretical discussions of these ten mantras available and no practical ritual guides we may assume that they were devised as theoretical links

within the mythological and theological structure of the tradition developed to give a role to figures deemed particularly important in Śrīvidyā's transmission.

The twelve "original" teachers may perhaps be a series of references to the earliest lineages associated with Śrīvidyā's transmission. Contemporary adepts maintain that all twelve versions of the single mantra were, in fact, once practiced and that for various reasons the lines of transmission in all but two of the lineages were broken.[15] This opinion meets with only marginal support in historical sources. Yoginīhṛdaya 2.14 says that the mantra has come through an uninterrupted succession of teachers from Śiva to the present. Amṛtānanda, like other commentators, emphasizes that the mantra is efficacious only when transmitted in a traceable lineage (parampara).[16] Umānandanātha has provided a list of teachers for each of the two popular mantras, lineages that presumably carry their transmission into his own day.[17]

Historical commentators have not labored over the ten obscure forms, maintaining only the tradition of mentioning them in the discussion of the "original" mantra traditions. It seems that the differences in mantra configuration were meant to suggest different theories and practices followed within each lineage, but this too has become obscured. If ever there was such a series of lineages with distinctive

traits they have long since perished. Historical evidence suggests that ten of the twelve lineages have only the name of the teacher and the mantra by which to identify themselves.

C. Kāmeśvara and Lopamudrā: *kādi* and *hādi* *vidyās*

Only in the case of the Manmatha/Kāmeśvara and Lopamudrā *vidyās* is there any indication that distinctive traditions accompany the different configurations of the mantra. In the *Śrīvidyāratnasūtras* attributed to Gauḍapāda, the author proffers an explanation of the emergence of the two *vidyās* without mentioning the remaining ten. He says that Devī after creating the universe and the gods took the form of the goddess to establish Dharma. She next took the form of the sages to increase knowledge when in the middle of the ocean of jewels arose Kāmarāja and Lopamudrā who established Śrīvidyā lineages.[18] But in either case the goddess herself is identical to the *śrīvidyā* which is the nameless consciousness (*cit*) that pervades reality.[19] The *Śrīvidyāratnasūtras* are only one example of Śrīvidyā authors slanting their discussions towards the two mantra traditions that have an historical impact.

The distinction between the fifteen and sixteen syllable mantras is best viewed in the specific contexts of the two prominent traditions of transmission, the Kāmeśvara

vidyā and the Lopamudrā *vidyā*. The fifteen syllable *pañcadaśī* or *pañcadaśākṣarī* is the basis for the sixteen syllable *ṣoḍaśī* or *ṣoḍaśākṣarī* and the latter should be considered only in light of its being a variation of the former.

The *śrīvidyā* in fifteen or sixteen syllables and in any of the twelve configurations of the sages is universally acknowledged to be the subtle (*sūkṣma*) form of the goddess and the second corner of Śrīvidyā's triadic theology. Bhāskararāya echoes the views of earlier commentators when he says:

> Thus there are three forms of Devī, which partake of both the *prakāśa* and *vimarśa* aspects, namely the physical (*sthūla*), the subtle (*sūkṣma*), and the supreme (*parā*); the physical form has hands, feet, etc.; the *subtle* consists of *mantra* and the *supreme* is the *vāsanā*...The subtle form again is threefold...[20]

Rāmesvara Sūri commenting on *PKS*, 1.11 extends the identification of the physical deity with the subtle mantra to the guru which he says is also not different than the subtle body (*sūkṣmaśarīra*).[21] Amṛtānanda adds that it is the repetition of the mantra when identified with the Supreme Goddess that defines contemplative worship (*upāsana*).[22]

The *vidyā* of Kāmeśvara, frequently called Kāmarāja *vidyā*, is the version of the *pañcadaśākṣarī* given the most detailed scrutiny in Śrīvidyā sources. Its traditions

dominate discussions of mantric interpretation and its form is the focus of ritual in all known handbooks (*paddhatis* or *nibandhas*).[23] Kāmarāja *vidyā* is best known by the shortened designation *kādi*, meaning "beginning with *ka*", and is identified with the tradition of the *kādimata* school discussed in Śrīvidyā's earliest written sources. Lopamudrā's *vidyā* is called *hādi*, "beginning with *ha*", and counts among its adherents Puṇyānanda and his disciple Amṛtānanda. Though it is called the *hādimata*, the "*hādi* school", its doctrinal differences with *kādi* are never clearly articulated. One is led to conclude that the *kādi*/*hādi* distinction is based entirely on mantra configurations rather than on theological or speculative issues.

The Kāmarāja *pañcadaśākṣarī* is the one form of the *śrīvidyā* about which there appears little or no controversy, the form of *hādividyā* being a less settled issue. *Kādi*, unlike *hādi* which has a number of variations, conforms literally to the fifteen syllable prescription and is quite possibly the original form from which the other twelve formulations are derived. This at least appears to be the historical situation and is supported by contemporary adepts. Even the historically attested Lopamudrā *hādividyā* is most frequently viewed as a derivative form of *kādi* and takes second place in the majority of presentations.[24]

D. The śrīvidyā, Śākta Speculations and Triadic Symbolism

Kādi is in three parts described as peaks (kūṭas), each viewed as a separate portion of the mantra. These are the vāgbhavakūṭa or peak that is the nature (bhava) of speech (vāk), the kāmarājakūṭa or peak of Kāmarāja (literally, King of Desire) and the śaktikūṭa or peak of Śakti. Kādi pañcadaśākṣarī thus literally is:

Vāgbhavakūṭa: **ka e ī la hrīṃ**
Kāmarājakūṭa: **ha sa ka ha la hrīṃ**
Śaktikūṭa: **sa ka la hrīṃ**

The tripartite configuration of the mantra is another example of Śrīvidyā's penchant for triadic symbols. Following the general Hindu pattern, to the three components is frequently added a fourth, comparable to the addition of mokṣa to the puruṣārthas or "the fourth" (turīya) to the waking, dreaming and sleeping states. Each kūṭa of the mantra then is respectively associated with each element in the symbolic triads. Identical associations apply to the hādividyā's configuration in three kūṭas. Thus the mantra is a key component in the description of creation and has a prominent role in the general cosmological definition of reality. But unlike other symbols or imagery it is more than descriptive or symbolic.

The mantra in its subtle, pre-articulated forms is an actual part of the creative process and even when manifested as ordinary sound is not considered merely a description of creation: the mantra is the sound (*śabda*) from which the universe itself emanates. It is also more than a theoretical symbol of Śākta cosmology since it plays an active role in spiritual discipline (*sādhana*). The mantra is the focus of contemplative worship (*upāsana*); its repetition (*japa*) is classified hierarchically as silent, self-audible or openly verbalized.[25]

The chart below outlines the theoretical and descriptive associations of the three *kūṭas*. Each set of triads can be interpreted as corresponding to the three aspects of the human personality, that is, through body, speech and mind.[26] For example, the identification of the *śrīvidyā* with the *praṇava* involves its being located within the body, verbally articulated, and mentally contemplated as the source of creation. Bhāskararāya in his *Varivasyarahasya* or "Secret of Worship" observes that the three *kūṭas* of the *śrīvidyā* are like the beads of a garland, one naturally flowing into the next.[27]

Mantra *kūṭas*:	Vāgbhava	Kāmarāja	Śakti	Fourth
Pranava:	a	u	m	
Stage of Sound:	Paśyantī	Madhyamā	Vaikharī	Parā
Goddess:	Vama	Jyeṣṭhā	Raudrī	Ambikā
Aspect of Śakti:	Icchā	Jñāna	Kriyā	Parā
Yogic Center:	Mūlādhara	Svadhiṣṭhāna	Anāhata	Manipura

[Or:	Anāhata	Ajña	Lālatamādhya]
Cosmos:	Agni (fire)	Sūrya (sun)	Soma (moon)
Consort:	Brahma	Viṣṇu	Śiva Brahman
Lalitā's form:	Head	Body	Lower Extremities

The universe is envisioned in Śrīvidyā's theistic monism as an emanation from a single source identified with the Brahman of Upanisadic speculation. This Brahman manifests as primordial sound (*vāc*) which gradually becomes articulated and physical. According to Tantric speculation, the One becomes many by devolving its own spiritual and material substance. Stated in the traditional theological terms of Śāktism, the union of Śiva and Śakti is at once both a perfect unity and the beginnings of the dualistic universe. At the moment of creation the cosmos emerges from the state of pure illumination (*prakāśa*), that is from Brahman identified theologically with Śiva. The One becomes two by inherently propelling (*sphurattā*) itself into a state of reflective consciousness (*vimarśa*).[28] It is Śiva, the illuminative (*prakāśa*), reflecting upon his own individuality that is called Śakti, the reflection (*vimarśa*). In this act of reflection the universe in its dualistic sense begins to emerge from Śiva's own being.[29] The One becomes two to enjoy the bliss of union---a union symbolized in the sexual embrace of Śiva and Śakti. From this point forward Śiva, while the original source of being, becomes a secondary figure in Śākta cosmology. Śakti is the

active, manifest, and creative component of the universe and, in effect, subsumes the role of Śiva.

In as much as he is the purely illuminative (prakāśa), Śiva is identified as Brahman and is the goal of spiritual realization. It is as reflected consciousness (vimarśa) that the One Brahman takes the form of the Self (ātman) each individual. The ātman is thus identified with Śakti. These cosmological events are paralleled also in the human consciousness: the true identity of the inner Self (ātman) with Brahman is the union of the reflective cognition (vimarśa) of the "I" with the source of its being, the pure consciousness (cit) of the illuminating (prakāśa) Brahman. For Śāktas dualistic consciousness emerges from the subject's emerging self-awareness when engaging the objective world; it is the concept of the Self's awareness as such that explains why Śakti is the primary focus of the Śākta's attentions. By discriminating the mere accretions of self-reflection from their source in the Self (ātman), the adepts realizes that the remainder is identical to Śakti in her pure reflective state (vimarśa). Completing the process of identification, the adept concludes that this reflection (vimarśa) without dualistic connotations is none other than the purely illuminative (prakāśa) Brahman with the anthropomorphic form of Śiva. Identifying his own Self (ātman) with Śakti, the Śākta

Tantric adept returns to the original state in which Śakti as reflection (vimarśa) first enjoyed the bliss (ānanda) of union with Brahman in the form of the purely illuminative (prakāśa) Śiva. Thus if creation is viewed as an evolution of One into many, then the process of realizing that creative event is a devolution, that is, a process of returning to the original unity of Śiva and Śakti. This "return" is achieved through ritual contemplation, yoga and devotion directed towards obtaining the liberating knowledge of the identity of Śiva and Śakti.

To Śāktas the focus of practical worship falls on the goddess because she is the source of the individual Self's own self-cognitive reflection as an "I". She thus provides the initial access to the source of cognitive reflection.

The first manifest form of Śakti's reflection (vimarśa) in the creative act is the mantra, which is nothing other than Self's incipient act of self reflection. The stages of devolution from the One source are identified with the śrīvidyā. At the first level of symbolic identification the śrīvidyā is linked to the primary mantric sources within Vedic tradition, that is, the praṇava and the Ṛg Vedic gāyatrī. These phonic sources of Brahman parallel the material world as it devolves from four stages of sound, beginning with the transcendent (parā) śabdabrahman. The mantra finally emerges into the physical form of ordinary

speech (*vaikharī*) after having passed through the body's subtle yogic centers. Each stage of speech is associated with the goddess in a particular aspect (as shown above in the chart) and each of these corresponds to her creative forces of desire (*icchā*), knowledge (*jñāna*) and action (*kriyā*). With each of these divine aspects of the Supreme Śakti is identified the corresponding male deity and their respective powers. In the final analysis the goddess emerges supreme in the form designated Ambikā. She is identical to Śiva (Brahman) and at the same time in the process of revealing herself.

The general pattern of these speculations, identifying a mantra such as the *śrīvidyā* with the devolving cosmos, is common to all Śāktas, if not to all Tantrics. Śrīvidyā tradition has merely given its own mantra a context within this general pattern of belief. The elegance of the Śrīvidyā system, however, is apparent only when the associations of the mantra with the *śrīcakra* are brought into picture. (These will be made more elaborate when the discussion turns directly to the cakra.) The fundamental macrocosmic/microcosm symbolism identifies the *śrīcakra* with the universe and the human body and thus the associations between mantra and cakra, and those between the three *kūṭas* of the mantra and the *Śrīcakra*'s nine sub-cakras (identified with the nine "gates" of the body), are at least

superficially apparent. The mantra's three *kūṭas* correspond to three sets of sub-cakras and to the sides of the triangle at the center of the *śrīcakra*. Each set of syllables in the mantra is also identified with one of the six yogic centers in the body (to which three more are added) and these, respectively, with the sub-cakras of the *śrīcakra*.

The *śrīvidyā* is an expression of primordial sound (*vāk* or *śabda*), though it is not merely *one* of the phonic emanations parallelling the material world but *the* form from which the whole of creation has evolved.[30] Tradition maintains it shares the identical features of *auṃ*, the Vedic *praṇava*. Śrīvidyā sources develop Vedic speculations by simply transferring the meanings of *auṃ* onto the *śrīvidyā*.[31] As the above chart shows, the three *kūṭas* correspond to the three constituents of *auṃ* (*a*-*u*-*ṃ*).

Contemporary adepts frequently explain the *śrīvidyā* in its three parts in terms of Gaudapada's discussion of *auṃ* as tripartite in the *Māṇḍukhyakārikās*.[32] The contemporary popularity of the Sankara tradition and its links to Śrīvidyā adepts make allusions to Gauḍapāda appear all the more germane to interpretations of triadic symbolism. In effect, whatever is said about *auṃ* either as a triadic symbol or as the primordial emanation (cf., *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 1, 4; 9, 23,2) applies to the *śrīvidyā* by inference since the *śrīvidyā* is considered the *praṇava*'s

hidden form.33 The explanation of the śrīvidyā as tripartite is a reflection of its "explicit" relationship with the praṇava.

E. The śrīvidyā, Vedic gāyatrī and Vedic traditions

Far more attention is paid both in historical and contemporary sources to the identification of the śrīvidyā with the gāyatrī of Ṛg Veda, 3.62.10. This most sacred of Vedic utterances is said by Bhaskararaya to have two forms, one explicit (spaṣṭham), the other deeply concealed (gopanīyataram).34 Like the praṇava, the gāyatrī too is identical with Brahman. According to Bhāskararāya it is the Tripurā Upaniṣad that gives the secret meaning of the gāyatrī.35 Each of the śrīvidyā's three kūṭas, Bhāskararāya explains, is itself a microcosm of the esoteric gāyatrī.

The Ṛg Vedic gāyatrī mantra reads in Sanskrit: **tát savitúr váreṇyaṃ bhárgo devásya dhīmahi dhíyo yó naḥ pracodáyāt.** Its explicit formulation would appear to have nothing to do with the fifteen syllables of śrīvidyā; and unlike the śrīvidyā it expresses a clear meaning at the level of ordinary language. It may be translated: "Let us contemplate the lovely splendor of [the god] Savitṛ that he may inspire our minds."

For the Tantric the gāyatrī's literal meaning is perhaps its least important sense. While in the Tantras the

Vedic *gāyatrī* is variously interpreted, in Śrīvidyā it acquires a very specific significance. The majority of Śrīvidyā commentators still maintain that the utterance of the *gāyatrī* is restricted to members of the upper three estates (*traivarṇikas*) while qualification for the *śrīvidyā*, *gāyatrī*'s esoteric form, is determined through a different set of values.[36] The key point is that qualification (*adhikāra*) for the mantra is no longer based on birth or gender.

The individual syllables of each *kūṭa* of the *kādi śrīvidyā*, Bhāskararāya points out, is actually a portion of the *gāyatrī*. The chart below shows the relationships:

Vāgbhavakūṭa

ka = tat = Kāmeśvara = Brahman
e = savitur vareṇyaṃ = Kāmesvarī = (Śakti)
i = bhargo devasya dhī- = Śiva
la = mahi = Earth
hrīṃ = dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt = Māyā

Kāmarājakūṭa

ha = tat
sa = savitur (Three syllables = Three Words of the
Mantra)
ka = vareṇyaṃ
ha = bhargo devasya dhī- (One syllable = Six Syllables)
la = mahi
hrim = dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt

Śaktikūṭa

sa = tat savitur vareṇyaṃ
ka = bhargo devasya dhī-
la = mahi
hrim = dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt

The interpretation Bhāskararāya offers in *VVR*,

presented in the chart above, is actually based on the exposition given in the *Tripurātāpinī Upaniṣad* (*TTU*).[37] Thus *TTU*, verses 7-15 explain the *vāgbhavakūṭa* as the *gāyatrī*. The first word, *tat* (that), is identified with the eternal Brahman, the One who comes forth as the manifest world filled with desires and hence is called Kāmeśvara, i.e., Śiva.[38] Verse nine links *gāyatrī* not only to the *śrīvidyā* but to the *śrīcakra*. The syllable *la* is understood as the earth (*mahi*) in the form of the goddess.[39] The five syllables of the *vāgbhavakūṭa*, it is said in conclusion to this section, are the five elements that make up material creation.[40] The interpretation of the *Kāmarājakūṭa*, called in *TTU* the *kāmakūṭa*, is first given a fundamentally yogic perspective based on identification of portions of the *gāyatrī* with syllables of *śrīvidyā* "located" within the bodily cakras according to the six cakra theory of *kuṇḍalinī yoga*.[41] The *kāmarājakūṭa* further suggests the secrets of *kāmakalā* meditation on the female organ. The meanings of the term *kāmakalā* are directly associated with the six syllables of the *kāmarājakūṭa*. The third *śaktikūta* is identified with *gāyatrī* by linking portions of the mantra to the individual Self (*ātman*), Śiva (found again, as in the *vāgbhavakūṭa*, in the syllable *ka*) and Śakti (especially within the seed-syllable (*bījākṣara*) *hrīṃ*).

In the *Jñānarṇava Tantra* each of the *śrīvidyā*'s three

kūṭas are identified with the acquisition of certain levels of empowerment: the accomplishment (*siddhi*) of the *vāgbhavakūṭa* is, as the name itself suggests, a mastery of speech; the *kāmarājakūṭa* gives splendor like that of Indra and the *śaktikūṭa* attracts the three worlds such that they cooperate with the wishes of the adept.[42]

Nowhere, however, does Bhāskararāya suggest that the daily repetition of the *śrīvidyā* exempts members of the twice-born castes from their obligation to recite the Vedic *gāyatrī* at the appropriate daily junctures (*sandhyavandana*). Rāmeśvara maintains the usual Tantric position that twice-born males must keep both Vedic and Tantric obligations regarding mantras and rituals even when they are parallel or seemingly repetitious. This position undergoes important changes in some contemporary interpretations in which repetitious Tantric practices are optional for twice-borns performing the parallel Vedic rites.[43] But as far as the twice-born Śrīvidyā initiates are concerned it is their duty to maintain both principal mantra obligations; they must recite both the Vedic *gāyatrī* and the *śrīvidyā* every day.

The most important parallel of Tantric and Vedic rites is seen in the specially designed mantric interpretations that Śrīvidyā matches with established Vedic traditions. These are developed not for the sake of posing an alternative to Vedic forms but to claim an esoteric Vedic

legacy. There is perhaps no more explicit symbol of Vedic mantra traditions than the Ṛg Veda's gāyatrī mantra---what Basham has called "the most holy passage of that most holy scripture."[44]

As it has already been noted, the literal semantic meaning of the Vedic gāyatrī is now far less important than its being a sacred sound conveying an esoteric meaning. As a ritual mantra it functions in many ways, for example to purify an individual (cf., Vaśiṣṭha Dharmasūtra, 28.10-25) and as a safeguard to life and lineage (cf., Gāyatrī Upaniṣad).[45] The predilection for esoteric interpretation is seen in both Tantric and non-Tantric sources.[46] The key issue remains the power of the mantra as a particular set of sounds: when uttered according to prescription these sacred sounds project influence over nature, human events and even the supernatural, including the gods.[47] Tantrics add to these by not only making semantic meanings secondary but by effectively sublating them in favor of the view that mantras are the articulated form of material and spiritual reality. The use of apparently meaningless particles is, of course, not unknown in ancient Vedic sources; particles such as svāhā serve important functions in ritual formulations but have no literal, semantic meaning. Tantrism harkens back to this Vedic notion by deeming the sounds themselves efficacious and takes the concept further by considering

mantras *with* semantic sense to be "lower" than mantras constructed solely of seemingly meaningless seed-syllables. The Vedic *gāyatrī* is a more explicit form of the mantric reality (and hence a "lower form") than the *śrīvidyā* not merely because it is the best known expression of the *Ṛg Veda* but because it continues to convey meaning at the level of speech. In Śrīvidyā tradition the *gāyatrī* does not gain a deeper esoteric significance until it is interpreted as the explicit form of the *śrīvidyā*. The *śrīvidyā*, however, without any semantic meaning is interpreted *only* in terms of an esoteric meaning. As one Śrīvidyā adept put it:

> Because it is purely seed-syllables [*bījākṣaras*], *śrīvidyā* is the purest form of mantra. It does not make a request or praise the god, it is God's purest expression. *Gāyatrī* is great but it cannot match *śrīvidyā* because it is still in language; it is *Veda and mantra* but when transformed into the *śrīvidyā* its greatness increases.[48]

Śrīvidyā tradition also goes beyond the usual ritual definitions of the Vedic *gāyatrī*. Whereas the explicit Vedic form is an obligation (*nityakarma*) based "merely" on caste, the esoteric *gāyatrī*, the *śrīvidyā,* requires a more elite qualification since it is not linked to birth but to spiritual disposition (*adhikāra*). The privileged status of the *gāyatrī* limited to *traivarṇika* caste males is made subordinate to a new set of qualifications for initiation into *śrīvidyā*. The caste and gender restrictions

surrounding the explicit _gāyatrī_ are not rejected _per se_ but considered to be of less consequence to the spiritually adept. Caste is not rejected but sublated in favor of the "higher" Tantric values.[49]

The _śrīvidyā_ too involves obligatory rites (_nityakarma_) in the sense that the initiated are required to perform certain daily rituals in which it is the centerpiece; but its rewards, like its initiation, are reserved for the privileged initiate. The Vedic _gāyatrī_, however, has not diminished in status in most contemporary south Indian lineages though its importance within Śrīvidyā _sādhana_ is a subject of much debate and controversy.

Śrīvidyā has also interpreted its mantra as part of Vedic tradition in other ways. Bhāskararāya says that the appearance of the _śrīvidyā_ in a concealed form in the _Tripurā Upaniṣad_ is proof of its being part of Vedic revelation (_śrūti_). There is no doubt, at least in his mind (and in the minds of the majority of contemporary adepts) that this text is an ancient Vedic source.[50] The mantra's presentation in the Upaniṣad is not the only esoteric formulation in the Vedic _śrūti_, nor is it necessarily the most ancient since Śrīvidyā tradition also identifies the mantra with a passage of the _Ṛg Veda_. The passage is _Ṛg Veda_, 5.47.4, **catvāra īṃ bibharti kṣemayantaḥ**, which literally translates: "the four [priests], desiring benefit

for themselves, worship [this god]".[51] Bhāskararāya gives the standard Śrīvidyā interpretation of the verse when he says it means "that which contains the four *Īṃs* confers benefit." [52] The four *Īṃs* refer to the four occurrences of the letter *Ī* in the *kādi pañcadaśākṣarī*, that is, the *Ī* vowel in the first *kūṭa* and the three *Ī* vowels occurring within the syllable *hriṃ* at the end of each *kūṭa*. This interpretation thus indirectly asserts the "originality" of the *kādi* form of *pañcadaśākṣarī* since no other fifteen syllable configuration (including the *hādi*) contains four long *Ī* vowels.

It is the *ṣoḍaśī* or sixteen syllable version of the *kādi* mantra which, according to some oral traditions, provides in its sixteenth syllable, the fourth *Ī*. *Ṣoḍaśi* or *ṣoḍaśākṣarī*, according to some adepts, is formed by adding the seed-syllable (*bījākṣara*) *srīṃ* to the end of the fifteen syllable *kādi pañcadaśi*. This sixteenth syllable is so secret, it is maintained, that it is not ordinarily discussed explicitly even in privately circulated texts. Thus according to this interpretation, the first *Ī* vowel occurring in the *vāgbhavakūṭa* (that is, the *Ī* not part of the *bījākṣara hrīṃ*) is not the first *Ī* referred to in the Vedic verse. The three *i*'s of *hriṃ* are coupled with the *i* of the seed-syllable *sriṃ* to complete the pattern of catvāra *Iṃ*.[53] The effort to derive all the four *i*'s from the *hrims*

rather than accepting the *Ī* of the *vāgbhavakūṭa* is due to the esoteric significance of *Īm* itself which is said to be the equivalent to the secret *kāmakalā*.[54] This particular formation of the *ṣoḍaśī*, however, in which *śrīṃ* is taken to be the sixteenth syllable is not without controversy. Some maintain that the addition of *śrīṃ* is not the "great *ṣoḍaśī*" (*mahāṣoḍaśī*) but merely the "abbreviated *ṣoḍaśī*" (*laghuṣoḍaśī*, literally the "light sixteen").

Śrīvidyā interprets its root mantra as emerging *within* the Vedic tradition. But unlike Vedic mantras, Śrīvidyā tradition maintains, its mantras are not explicit (*prakaṭa*) but secret (*rahasya*), the meaning (or set of meanings) sometimes further concealed by attributing esoteric significance to the mantra's particular elements. While the majority of Śrīvidyā traditionalists express deference to the Vedas and locate their own tradition within the broader Vedic tradition, some adepts hold that explicit forms of Vedic revelation are not particularly suitable to the expeditious path of Tantric *sādhana*. The alternative Tantric interpretation however is kept a strict secret because of its inherent danger to the uninitiated. *PKS*, 1.30 delivers what might be deemed the final word on the explicit forms of Vedic revelation:

> Like a prostitute the mantras [or teachings, *vidyā*] of the Vedas and other [teachings] are

> explicit. Among all views this [Śrīvidyā] is [most] secret.[55]

Rāmeśvara further explains that Vedic teaching can be obtained for a price while Śrīvidyā can only be a gift of the guru's grace; the vidyā that leads to the realization of Brahman (brahmavidyā), he says, is not available even for gold.[56] Rāmeśvara does not, however, make these remarks at the further expense of the Vedic tradition, preferring to emphasize the role of initiation and the need for an authentic teacher. This point should be clear: even the seemingly admonishing remarks about Vedic tradition in Śrīvidyā sources are made in order to conclude that their own revelations, especially mantric revelations, are superior because they are the Veda's esoteric meaning. Śrīvidyā does not reject the authority of Vedic injunctions but rather places them on a subordinate level. Among Tantrics, Śrīvidyā traditionalists are rarely seen lashing out at Vedic orthodoxy and the PKS offers an unusual example of a tendency not uncommon in other Tantric traditions. Modern adepts, for example, compare the statement in the PKS to Kṛṣṇa's rather critical view of Brahmins and Vedic practices in the Bhagavadgītā; they say that Kṛṣṇa does not repudiate Vedic tradition but interprets within its boundaries. Likewise, they assert, that their positions do not constitute a rejection of the Vedas but rather a richer and, indeed, a secret interpretation of them. In

contemporary south India, Śrīvidyā exhibits strong conservative tendencies that may not, in fact, reflect the pan-Indian historical tradition. Southern culture and the predominant Brahmin influence suggest that the tradition's regional character has been shaped in ways that more readily conform to the expectations of upper and middle class, conservative Brahminism. In certain striking instances, however, important southern figures such as Bhāskararāya deviate from these conservative patterns and still retain their popularity among contemporary conservative interpreters.

F. Esoteric Meanings of the śrīvidyā

The syllables of the śrīvidyā have not only a collective symbolism but individual esoteric meanings. These points are elaborated in the Yoginīhṛdaya and in Bhāskararāya's Varivasyarahasya. A few examples will suffice to demonstrate the breadth of interpretation and the impact such speculation has had on mantric initiation and practice.

Each syllable of the pañcadaśi is associated with at least one particular deity and sometimes several. These deities are considered subordinate aspects of Lalitā and reflect certain qualities or attributes of her nature.57 The bījākṣara hrīṃ, occurring three times in the kādi and

hādi śrīvidyā, attracts the most attention. When taken separately it represents the goddess of the earth, Bhuvaneśvarī, also regarded in the broader Śākta tradition as one of the ten great goddesses (*daśadevatā*).[58] Placed within the *śrīvidyā* it acquires an additional set of meanings and is the subject of elaborate esoteric interpretation. Bhāskararāya, for example, interprets *hrīṃ* as twelve distinctive elements each with a significance the interpretation of the entire *śrīvidyā*.[59] Since *hrīṃ* is composed of four constituents each of these is also liable to interpretation. The vowel *ī*, for example, has manifold symbolism; it is source of the primordial sound (*nāda*) that creates the first three sub-cakras of the *śrīcakra* at the moment of creation. It is responsible for and representative of a portion of the creation of the universe. It is also the cause of dreaming consciousness in which the four components making up the individual consciousness (the inner organ (*antaḥkāraṇa*) composed of the *manas*, *buddhi*, *ahaṃkāra* and *citta*) operate.[60] The *r* of *hrīṃ*, to cite another example, is the cause of the illuminative form (*prakāśarūpa*) characterizing the waking state of consciousness while *m* is the cause of deep sleep.[61]

The esoteric explanation of the *śrīvidyā*'s syllables serves a larger purpose in the symbolic scheme. It links the broad cosmological patterns of creation to yogic

concepts and practices and is the means through which the Self (ātman) within the body, a microcosm of the śrīcakra, is identified with the śrīcakra as Brahman in the subtle form (sūkṣmarūpa) of sound (śabda). For each sound in the mantra or element within the bījākṣara there is a series of identifications with different parts of the universe in its subtle and parallel physical forms. Each of these correspond to aspects of human consciousness and parts of the body. They are then identified with the emergence of the universe in the form of the śrīcakra.

The Śrīvidyā adept internalizes the esoteric meanings of the mantra during the period leading to and following initiation. It is not as if with each recitation of the mantra the adept contemplates the meaning of the mantra's individual syllables. It is rather that the meaning of the syllables contribute to the efficacy of the mantra's recitation: when an adept recites the mantra he or she brings the cumulative sense of its power beyond its being a sound configuration that subtly parallels the essence of the material world. Out of these interpretations so long studied and contemplated, the adept adds another dimension to the mantra's power. The repetition of the mantra itself in light of these interpretive studies is considered the direct experience of Brahman. Without imbibing the mantra's meaning in all its complexity its recital is deemed

useless. As Bhāskararāya says:

> The utterance of sound without a knowledge of the [true] import bears no fruit, [even as] the offering thrown over ashes in the absence of fire does not burst into flame. Those who are merely reciting the different sounds without a knowledge of their meaning may be compared to the donkey carrying a load of sandlewood.[62]

The Śrīvidyā is also given six traditional meanings (arthas). These are unquestionably the mantra's most widely circulated interpretations since they apply to all its variations. Their exposition in the Yoginīhṛdaya places them in a source common to all Śrīvidyā adepts. Bhāskararāya's explanation in the VVR, though based on a kādi interpretation, is far more straightforward than that of the VT. The first of the six meanings he explains thus:

> The Supreme Goddess (Parādevata) who is the aggregate of the seven Śakti-s, Vāma, etc. and is the embodiment of the thirty-six Tattva-s does not differ from this Mantra [even by the smallest measure].
> The letter a and the letter Ha which are identical with Śiva and Śakti, which are devoid of form, which embrace each other and which pulsate and shine, are [no other than] the Supreme Brahman mentioned in the Upanisad-s.
> These two are manifest in the Mantra itself as the first [letter] of the last Group and the fourth [letter] of the middle Group. Hence, the identity of the Goddess, the Mantra, and the universe is established as bhavārtha.[63]

Bhavārtha here refers to the "existential meaning", that is, to the existential identity of the mantra's sounds with ultimate reality.

The sampradāyārtha or "traditional meaning", the second of the mantra's meanings, identifies the syllables collectively with the five physical elements and the thirty-six tattvas or categories that make up reality.[64] The result according to Bhāskararāya:

> As there is no difference between the cause and its effect, between the thing signified (vācya) and the word which signifies the thing (vācaka), and between the Brahman and the universe, so also the universe and this Vidyā are identical [in relation to each other]. This is the Sampradāyārtha.[65]

The third or "hidden meaning" (nirgarbhārtha) is explained as the identity of the individual's Self (ātman), the guru and Śiva while the fourth kaulikārtha (the "meaning according to the Kula") sets forth the identity of Self, guru and goddess.[66] This fourth meaning also includes the identification of the mantra with the planets, the asterisms (nakṣatra), the senses and their respective objects and the material (prakṛti) and spiritual world (puruṣa).[67] Bhāskararāya's descriptive analysis identifies all these elements with the śrīcakra's sub-cakras and defines the source of their truth as the guru. Summarizing, Bhāskararāya says:

> In this manner the identity of the Mother, the Vidyā, the Cakra, the Guru and the [pupil's own] self [is patent]. This is the Kaulikārtha of the Mantra.[68]

The fifth or "secret meaning" (rahasyārtha) identifies

the mantra with the yogic centers of the body and completes the pattern of microcosmic/macrocosmic symbolism by linking the human form to the universal forms set forth in the previous four arthas. With the comprehension of each meaning a new level of realization is achieved, the sixth and final level expressing the "meaning of ultimate reality" (mahātattvārtha). At this final level all previous forms of dualistic subject/object identification are transcended.

By re-envisioning the process of creation in the śrīcakra and by enacting its creative sounds, the Śrīvidyā adept draws a map, as it were, that leads back to the original state of dissolution. While the mantra is identified with the human body and the Śrīcakra the process is completed only in the contemplative experience of these six interconnected meanings. In the final analysis Bhāskararāya concludes:

> Unapproachable by word or mind and other senses, transcending the [thirty-six] Tattva-s, bigger than the biggest and smaller than the smallest, with a place loftier than the skies, identical with the universe, assuming the [subtle] forms of Consciousness (cit) and Bliss (ānanda): [such is Brahman] and therein should one concentrate his self with a view to attaining identity...[69]

The śrīvidyā's meanings are the basis for interpreting the symbols on the map of creation: in comprehending the mantra the adept no longer views material reality and its subtle sound counterparts as distinct or parallel entities

but as two perspectives of the same reality. The mantric level of being is realized to be the source of reality, physical or mental, and not merely its parallel or the means for achieving unity with it.

Each of the fifteen syllables of the kādividyā are also given esoteric etymologies common to many Tantric sources. Each syllable is viewed as a derivative of a particular Sanskrit verbal root and interpreted in accordance with the verb's meaning. Bhāskararāya, like other Tantric commentators, was obviously aware that most of these etymologies were not founded on grammatical grounds but nevertheless was not deterred from using etymology to develop esoteric meanings.

While in his description of the śrīvidyā's syllables there is a logic to the fanciful derivation of verbal roots, there is no grammatical basis for deriving a particular syllable from a given verbal root. As the chart below shows, the syllables which repeat may or may not be derived from the same verbal root and several syllables (or parts of the bījākṣara hrīṃ) are not given any verbal derivative. Interpreting the kādividyā, Bhāskararāya providesthe following esoteric meanings to the individual elements of the śrīvidyā:

Syllable	Derivative Verbal Root	Esoteric Meaning
Vāgbhavakūṭa		
ka	√kan, to shine	Śiva, the Illuminator
e	√in, to study	Instrument of learning, i.e., the buddhi
[**ka** + **e** indicates the luminous intellect]		
ī	√ī, to pervade	Pervading all reality
la + **ha** + **ri** =		Predominance
ṃ		Cause of Predominance
Kāmarājakūṭa		
ha	√han, to injure	Valor, **ha** is the cause of vanquishing the enemy
sa	√so, to enjoy √su, to procreate	Wealth, an aid to enjoyment
ka	√kam, to desire	Women, who are attracted by the mantra and who are the objects of desire
ha	√oharn, to go	Refers to achievement of valor, wealth, desire, etc.
la + **ha** + **ri**	√i, to shine	Fame
m		
Śaktikūṭa		
sa ka la		Are that by which the above actions are brought about
hṛ	√hṛ, to remove	The destroyer of the universe
i		Radiance, the cause of Creation and Preservation
[**hṛ** + **i** = the Mother who shines in the heart and dispels pain, **hri** is a dependent determinative compound (karmadharya) with ṃ]		
ṃ		Primal sound (nāda) or knowledge

This compounded meaning (*samastārtha*), Bhāskararāya says, is so called because it involves compounding several words, attributing to the mantra the accomplishment of all human desires and providing an essential meaning for the *vidyā* in an abridged form.[70]

G. The *śrīvidyā* Appended to Other Mantras

The *śrīvidyā* is also appended to other mantras and, most notably, to a *gāyatrī* form devised for Tripurā. Tantric sources have created forms of *gāyatrī* mantras by substituting terms within the basic skeletal pattern of the Vedic *gāyatrī*. These are especially popular in the worship of localized forms of the goddess. For example, Śivakāmasundarī, the consort of Cidambaram Naṭarāja, has a *gāyatrī* mantra that follows this pattern. It reads: **devadaveśī vidhmahe śivakāmeśī dhimahi tannaśśiva pracodayāt.**[71] *PKS* offers a form of Tripurā *gāyatrī* mantra that is to be recited with the *śrīvidyā*.[72] According to the prescription Tripurā's *gāyatrī* is interspersed with the *śrīvidyā* and reads: (1) [*vāgbhavakūṭa*] **ka e ī la hrīṃ tripurasundarī vidhmahe** (2) [*kāmarājakuṭa*] **ha sa ka ha la hrīṃ pitakāmani dhimahi** (3) [*śaktikūṭa*] **sa ka la hrīṃ tannaḥ klinna pracodayāt.** While meditating on this mantra Rāmeśvara explains that the adept is to imagine the *śrīcakra* on the disk of the sun. This links the original relationship of Vedic *gāyatrī*'s Savitṛ with Tripurā. In

contemporary practice this prescription in *PKS* is out of vogue and while several adepts knew of its textual reference, none practiced it. Other mantras appended to the *śrīvidyā* do not appear to have comparable textual sources. These are discussed in the contexts of the living tradition's oral transmissions in Part Two.

H. Tripurā Upaniṣad, Hādi and Kādi Vidyās

Unlike the *Tripurātāpinī* which compares *śrīvidyā* to *gāyatrī* and discusses the twelve mantra configurations before turning its attentions to the *śrīcakra*, the *Tripurā Upaniṣad* considers only two forms of the mantra, *kādi* and *hādi*. In *Tripurā Upaniṣad*, verses eight and nine, each syllable of the mantra is disclosed through a technical, encoded vocabulary. As Bhāskararāya remarks, "Because this mantra is deeply secret it should be learned only from the guru."[73] The primary or explicit meanings of the words in these Upaniṣadic verses give no indication of their actual esoteric sense. Bhāskararāya begins by pointing out that this particular esoteric revelation is unlike the explicit form of revealing the *gāyatrī*. He says:

> In some places the *gāyatrī* [mantra], the Mother of the Vedas, is recited explicitly even though it is the same [from the esoteric point of view as the *śrīvidyā*].[74]

Translated literally verse eight of the Upaniṣad reads:

> Desire, womb, lotus, wielder of the thunderbolt, cave, ha[-]sa, the wind, cloud and Indra. Again cave, sa[-]ka[-]la and Māyā--this is the primordial mantra [or original knowledge, ādividyā], Mother of the Universe, the Ancient.

The only clue that the verse indicates the mantra is the ambiguous term ādividyā which can be taken either in the sense of "original mantra" or in the more literal sense of "original knowledge". Without the help of the commentators the esoteric meaning of the verse, which in this case is truly the only one that makes sense, would remain obscured: an entirely purposeful concealment designed to preserve the secrecy of the vidyā. The commentators, however, make it clear that each word in the verse represents one of the syllables of the kādi pañcadaśākṣarī.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of Tripurā Upaniṣad's treatment of the śrīvidyā, however, is not its encoding vocabulary but that kādi vidyā is presented before hādi which is treated as a derivative. Bhāskararāya notes that Jñānārṇava Tantra regards these two forms of the śrīvidyā as superior over the other ten but concludes by saying, "because the kādividyā...has been described first, its priority (ādhikya) is suggested."75 It would appear that kādimata tradition has been so dominant historically that hādimata despite having had such influential adherents as Puṇyānanda and Amṛtānanda was never regarded by the

majority as the equal to *kādi*. Bhāskararāya expresses mixed views on the subject, saying in one place that *kādi* is superior while in the *Tripurā Upaniṣad* commentary he remarks with characteristic tolerance that, "...since all *vidyā*s are not different, a comparison of one to another is merely for the sake of praising [one and encouraging its performance]."76 Contemporary Śrīvidyā traditionalists maintain that the *kādi pañcadaśī* is the *ādividyā*, that is, the "original mantra" and historical textual sources suggest that this is in fact the case.

The actual configuration of the *hādividyā* is not without controversy and some confusion. This would appear to offer further support for the belief that *kādi* was the original form of the mantra and that *hādi*, though it is historically attested and attracted several formidable thinkers, is a derivative. The form of *hādi* suggested in the *Tripurā Upaniṣad* is the fifteen syllable configuration. As verse nine says,

> [Replacing] the three root [syllables of each *kūṭa* of this [Kāmarāja *kādividyā* as described in the previous verse with the letters ha, sa and ka represented by the words] six, seven and fire (*vahni*, also meaning Śiva) they [i.e., the devotees come to] dwell [in the Lopamudrā *hādividyā* mantra].77

Thus *hādividyā*'s configuration in fifteen syllables is:

Vāgbhavakūṭa: **ha sa ka la hrīṃ**

Kāmarājakūṭa: **ha sa ka ha la hrīṃ**

Śaktikūṭa: **sa ka la hrīṃ**

In some versions, however, it is not merely the first three syllables of the first *kūṭa* that is replaced but the entire first *kūṭa*. The result is a sixteen syllable configuration in which the *vāgbhavakūṭa* is identical to the *kāmarājakūṭa*. Whether this sixteen syllable version is considered the *ṣoḍaśī* form within Lopamudrā tradition is not clear since the discussion of all forms of the *ṣoḍaśī* is almost entirely restricted to *kādimata* sources.

The doctrinal differences between *kādi* and *hādi* traditions are difficult to assess for two reasons. First is the absence of mention of clear differences in the works of noted *hādi* or *kādi* proponents. Written texts give no indication of differing theoretical concepts attributed to each *mata* apart from the different mantra configurations. One can only conclude that the two *matas* apparently did not differ in conduct (*ācāra*) or with regard to specific ritual practices or in the appropriateness of certain ritual elements, as was clearly the case between the Kaulas and Samayins. Lakṣmīdhara, who offers brief comments on certain theoretical *kādi*/*hādi* differences, is not supported by any other historical figure.[78] Thus it would appear that the *matas* differed only to the degree that each favored its own

form of the mantra and its contemplation (bhāvanā). The most remarkable point, however, is that no extant ritual manuals---neither historical or contemporary---give the hādividyā a primary role. Exactly what hādimata rituals included and how they were performed, especially in regard to the use of the śrīvidyā within the śrīcakra pūjā, is not known. The ritual paddhatis, the texts at the heart of the practical ritual traditions which use the śrīvidyā in various types of ritual performance other than in japa, do not mention hādividyā. In fact, there is no indication in any of the historical paddhatis that the ritual performed according to hādimata would entail a substitution of hādi each time kādi is used outside of japa. The paddhatis do not seem to make room for such an interpretation and the only place where hādi appears to be used in place of kādi is in the japa.

Contemporary traditions shed no light on this issue since there are neither hādimata texts nor living adepts to offer an explanation. Curiously, neither Puṇyānanda in KKV nor Amṛtānanda in his commentary on YH give any clue as to what, if any, ritual factors change with the substitution of hādi for kādi.79 Despite their Kashmiri origins we cannot safely conclude that the practice of the hādividyā was strictly a Kashmiri or north Indian phenomenon even in light of the absence of a living hādimata tradition in the south.

Southern authors do not fail to mention the existence of both forms of the śrīvidyā and Bhāskararāya, a relatively recent figure, appears to acknowledge the practice of hādividyā in south India in his own day. The absence of historical and contemporary hādividyā adherents from the southern regions does leave open the possibility that it was essentially a Kashmiri or north Indian dominated practice; regarding its practice, however, we know little more than that it involved a transformation of the mantra's syllable configuration.

Qualification for each form of the śrīvidyā is sometimes associated with a predominance of either Śiva or Śakti in the individual personality. Contemporary oral traditions echo the views of the Śrīvidyāratnasūtras in which it is maintained that there are two dominant factors (tattvas) permeating reality, Śiva and Śakti; Śiva tattva is associated with Lopamudrā (i.e., hādividyā) while Śakti tattva is associated with Kāmarāja (kādividyā). Thus, according to the oral tradition, those more in need of the Śakti element receive the kādividyā and, since this is the majority of persons (how they make this determination is not clear), kādi is the more popular form of the mantra.[80] All Śrīvidyā traditionalists therefore locate themselves in either kādi or hādi lines and place their own teachers in a succession from the "original" gurus who learned the vidyā

from Śiva. Bhāskararāya notes that the lineages of Kāmarāja and Lopamudrā do indeed keep distinct meanings for the mantra (in its respective forms) but that these are only learned from the tradition and through a guru and "not from anything else".[81] Since there are, to my knowledge, no living traditions of the Lopamudrā lineage in south India it is no longer possible to elucidate these distinctions.

I. Ṣoḍaśākṣarī: The Sixteen Syllable Form of the śrīvidyā

The ṣoḍaśī is mentioned in Śrīvidyā sources but rarely discussed in any detail. Bhāskararāya explains the emergence of this form of the mantra:

> This (ṣoḍaśī) sprung from the Mūlādhara of the great Mother, and proceeding through the stages of Parā, Paśyantī, etc. emerged from her mouth in the Vaikharī form; and it was transmitted from teacher to pupil.[82]

Apart from these remarks there are two others worth noting in the LSN; these identify the term ṣoḍaśī as the sixteen year old virginal Lalita and as the sixteenth hidden kalā of the moon that adjoins the usual fifteen phases (tithis) identified with the fifteen nityās.[83] The addition of a sixteenth kalā and corresponding nityā to the usual fifteen (identified with the moon's phases and placed on the innermost trikoṇa of the śrīcakra) is analogous to the addition of a fourth element to the sets triadic

symbols. It is a deliberate attempt to add another dimension to this established concept. The sixteenth element added to the *śrīvidyā*'s fifteen syllable form plays the identical symbolic role as a fourth element added to a set of three. For example, regarding the symbolism of the fifteen *nityās* identified with the innermost *trikoṇa* of the *śrīcakra* and placed five to a side, the sixteenth, the higher and more subtle emanation, is placed on the *bindu* in the center. Thus the sixteenth *nityā* by its being identical to the symbol of absolute non-duality, the *bindu*, is outside the ordinary realm of the fifteen *nityās* identified on the central triangle. Like the fourth *puruṣartha*, *mokṣa*, or the fourth state (*turya*) in the description of consciousness as waking, dreaming and dreamless, the sixteenth element pushes beyond the realms of ordinary reality and is identified with the achievement of final goal of liberation. The sixteenth element of the set, like the fourth in a set of threes, subsumes and encompasses the others; rather than a simple contrast to the others, the final element envelopes and completes the symbolic pattern of meanings. This interpretation paralleling the sixteenth element of the *śrīvidyā* and the fourth element within triadic symbols is not uncommon among contemporary Śrīvidyā votaries.

It is not possible to determine whether the *ṣoḍaśī* is purely an historical, theological appendage to *kādividyā*.

There is only a cursory mention of the term *ṣoḍaśī* in Śrīvidyā sources and no indication of the structure of the mantra. The *ṣoḍaśī*'s form as well as its symbolic structure draws little or no attention from Śrīvidyā's major historical commentators. Bhāskararāya mentions the *ṣoḍaśī* when the *LSN* cues a discussion but it is clear that for him the term *mūlamantra* is reserved for the *kādividyā pañcadaśākṣarī*.[84] He expresses little interest in the explanation of the *ṣoḍaśī* and leaves it out of his most elaborate mantra discussions in the *Varivasyarahasya*. There do not appear to be any explicit references to *ṣoḍaśī* in any of Bhāskararāya's works or in those of other major historical commentators including such extensive ritual elaborations as Śrīvidyānandanātha's *Śrividyāratnākara*.

Ṣoḍaśī's adherents consider its secrecy one of the most significant aspects of its efficacy and the primary means of preserving its status. Oral transmission remains the basic method for elucidating *ṣoḍaśī*'s structure. Its actual forms are mentioned only rarely in privately circulated ritual manuals with no attention given to its symbolic interpretation.

As it has already been noted, according to the *kādimata*, there are two forms of the *ṣoḍaśī*, the abbreviated or "light" (*laghu*) version and the so-called "great" (*mahā*) version. The *laghuṣoḍaśī* retains the literal sixteen

syllable configuration by adding the seed-syllable (*bījākṣara*) *śrīṃ*.[85] This form, however, has lost currency among contemporary south Indian adepts who favor the *mahāṣoḍaśī*. *Mahāṣoḍaśī* does not conform literally to the sixteen syllable structure but rather adds two (or three) sets of syllables which, according to contemporary adepts, are counted as a single unit. Instead of three *kūṭas* the mantra is usually structured into six units:

(1) oṃ śrīṃ hrīṃ klīṃ aiṃ sauḥ (2) oṃ hrīṃ śrīṃ (3) ka e ī la hrīṃ (4) ha sa ka ha la hrīṃ (5) sa ka la hrīṃ (6) sauḥ aim klīṃ hrīm śrīṃ.

The *mahāṣoḍaśī* occasionally appears without the second of the six units though the form cited above is the one favored by the majority of contemporary adepts. The sixth unit is the first unit's syllables in reverse order which, according to some traditionalists, represents the most secret form of the *kāmakalā*, that is, the female organ denoted in other places esoterically in the phrase "half the letter °h'".[86] For those to whom *ṣoḍaśī* is the highest expression of the *śrīvidyā*, one going beyond the *kādividyā pañcadaśī*, its ritual and contemplative practice is considered an extension of an earlier initiation into the *pañcadaśī*. This opinion regarding the superiority of the *ṣoḍaśī*, however, is not universally shared. Several contemporary lineages maintain that because of the seeming

confusion in the ṣoḍaśī's structure, the pañcadaśī is not only the original form of the mantra but also superior.

J. The Meaning of the Mantra, Initiation and other mantras

> The devotion of the inept to the external ostentation [of the śrīvidyā], being without aptitude for what is necessary, is like a body in which life has perished, or a puppet from which the strings are detached.[87]

Bhāskararāya's remark cited above is a common reminder in Śrīvidyā literature that the efficacy of the mūlamantra is realized only when its meaning is made part of ritual practice and received in a transmission that follows the traditional prescriptions of initiation.[88] The aptitude for initiation and its results are succinctly stated by the SL commentator Kaivalyāśrama who quotes the Rudrayāmala to the effect that, "He who has no other birth receives the supreme pañcadaśākṣarī."[89] This point is essential to our understanding of the Śrīvidyā tradition's self image. Śrīvidyā has always considered initiation (dīkṣā) into the mantra as an elite form of spirituality, one linked to the concept of favorable karma acquired over the course of countless previous births. Like other Tantric sects it does not consider this special knowledge publicly accessible and, at least theoretically, proffers long lists of personal and social virtues that must be embodied before obtaining it.[90]

In its mantra initiations ŚrĪvidyā is both private and elitist; it asserts, in effect, that the subtle body of the goddess is not able to be worshipped by every devotee of Lalita. In this way the subtle form (sūkṣmarūpa) differs significantly from the physical (sthūlarūpa) which is generally considered to be open to all Hindus.

Initiation is usually given over an extended period of instruction culminating in an elaborate ritual, the focus of which is the giving of the śrĪvidyā. The ritual bestowal of the mantra is frequently accompanied by a gift of a physical śrĪcakra that becomes the initiates personal object of worship. These two aspects of the goddess are considered entrusted knowledge, not to be spoken of openly in the company of non-initiates. The initiate usually continues to worship the physical forms (sthūlarūpa) of Lalitā though the focus of attention is now shifted towards the mantra and yantra. Most significant, however, is that the mantra is itself considered the embodiment of knowledge (vidyā).

Rāmānanda remarks that knowledge in the form of the mantra (vidyā) is of two kinds, higher (parā) and lower (aparā); the higher form entails knowledge of Brahman and is in the subtle form (sūkṣma) of the goddess (i.e., the mantra itself) while the lower form, expressed in ritual and discussed in ritual portions of the texts (karmakhaṇḍa), is concerned with the goddess' physical, anthropomorphic

appearance (*sthūla*). He goes on to say that the *vidyā* of the supreme Brahman is *śrīvidyā*.[91]

Śivānanda makes another interpretive distinction. After remarking that the goddess is the essence of the knowledge of mantras, the *vidyās* themselves, and the heart of the Vedas and Kaula tradition, she is in her higher aspect (*parā*) the cause of the universe and is in the lower aspect (*aparā*) the actual effect, that is, the material world. This process of cause and effect is brought about through a free act of grace by the goddess when she is in absolute unity with Śiva. In the undifferentiated form of Brahman as sound (*śabda*) the mantra begins at the completely unarticulated level, that is, at the *parā* aspect. It then gradually devolves to the level of articulated speech (*vaikharī*) and in doing so becomes the manifest universe.[92]

Śrīvidyā tradition associates the power of the *śrīvidyā* with all types of accomplishment (*siddhi*), from the most mundane and worldly to the final goal of liberation. To perform the required forms of contemplative worship (*upāsana*) under the appropriate conditions is to be guaranteed these accomplishments.[93] Contemporary adepts emphasize that all *siddhis* other than liberation (*mokṣa*) are secondary accretions of the higher spiritual discipline; in other words, the Śrīvidyā initiate should aspire only to liberation when meditating on the mantra but in the process

is sure to acquire all other physical and spiritual powers.[94]

PKS 1.9 states that all forms of accomplishment (siddhi) are obtained through mantras and Rāmeśvara clarifies the point by saying that the śrīvidyā, though only one of many mantras, is the only mantra capable of producing all siddhis.[95] Yoginīhṛdaya, 1.4 makes clear that only the śrīvidyā can bring about liberation and not any other vidyā.[96] Precisely how the mantra is viewed in the liberative scheme is taken up separately, in the present context the connection between the empowerment of the mantra and its meanings and transmission deserve some further explanation.

The mantra itself has, according to oral and written traditions, descended in an uninterrupted succession of teachers from Śiva to the present (cf., YH, 2.14). A traceable lineage (parampara) through any one of the lines (sampradāya) of twelve Śrīvidyā teachers is an indispensible component in any particular group's claim to the śrīvidyā.[97] No single point is more frequently or emphatically made than the need for instruction and initiation into the mantra through these lines of qualified teachers.

Rāmeśvara aptly summarizes the opinions of Śrīvidyā adepts on the importance of initiation. Quoting the Paramānanda Tantra he says that "the first step of the

palace of liberation (mukti) is initiation (dīkṣā)."[98] The disciple worthy of this initiation is a paradigm of virtue; one no longer driven by material desires but by the urge to find the liberative truth.[99]

As in other Tantric traditions, Śrīvidyā initiation must be accompanied by unswerving devotion to the guru. To Bhāskararāya and the vast majority of contemporary adepts this loyalty to the teacher's interpretation is absolute: it is simply not possible for the truly qualified teacher to be in error since he is none other than Śiva himself.[100] In addition, Śrīvidyā, unlike some other Tantric traditions, advocates devotion to a single teacher (ekagurupāsti) for all forms of instruction though it is a known fact that several historical commentators including Bhāskararāya received non-Tantric instruction from teachers other than the one who initiated them into the śrīvidyā.

Mantra initiation is not an isolated event but part of a longer process of instruction that may take years. At one level the mantra is the culmination of initiation since it is usually not given until the student has acquired a sophisticated understanding of its esoteric meanings. Yet initiation is only the beginning of the spiritual path, an indispensible requisite for the higher forms of knowledge within the tradition, including the contemplative worship of the goddess.[101] The student is guranteed the efficacy of

the mantra itself provided it comes through an attested lineage. The actual accomplishment of certain powers, however, is considered a result of grace, a gift of the guru and goddess that takes place when the student fulfills his or her vows with sincerity. In Part Two we shall investigate specific cases of initiation addressing the general notion of qualification (adhikāra) and more especially how Śrīvidyā interprets Tantric values that allow non-twice born persons of both genders to participate in the sect.

The process of initiation in the Śrīvidyā tradition is described elaborately in the PKS which devotes an entire chapter to the subject.[102] Before the student actually receives the śrīvidyā, he or she goes through extensive purificatory rites and receives initiation into other mantras considered prefatory to receiving the śrīvidyā.[103] If the particular sampradāya includes the ṣoḍaśī then the pañcadaśī is given first and ṣoḍaśī may (or may not, depending upon the qualification of the student as determined by the guru) be given at the same time or in the future.

All Śrīvidyā lineages in practice include as a prerequisite to initiation into the śrīvidyā at least one other mantra, the mūlamantra of the god Gaṇapati. Rāmeśvara remarks that while the worship of the elephant-headed Gaṇeśa

is merely an accessory to the worship of the great vidyā (mahāvidyā) of Lalitā, it is nonetheless necessary for the successful fulfillment of this higher worship because this god insures the removal of all obstacles.[104] Umānanda concurs that the mūlamantra of Gaṇapati must be given before the initiate receives the śrīvidyā but disagrees with Rāmeśvara's reluctance to accept the guru's instruction as absolute.[105]

The PKS also prescribes initiation into the mantra of Bālātripurasundarī prior to initiation into Lalitā Mahātripurasundarī's mūlamantra. Initiation into Gaṇapati precedes the Bālātripurasundarī mantra and so is hierarchically subordinate to it but while Gaṇapati plays an important role in all later forms of ritual and contemplative worship, Bālātripurasundarī recedes into the background. In many cases, initiation into this lesser aspect of Lalita is foregone completely.[106] It receives only a cursory mention in most ritual handbooks and has drawn little attention from adepts interpreting its esoteric meaning and role in Śrīvidyā's spiritual discipline.[107]

Gaṇapati's subordinate but necessary role is seen in the construction of the mantra itself: as a request for certain spiritual empowerment combined with seed-syllables (bījākṣaras) it has a definite "ordinary language" element that the śrīvidyā has transcended by favoring only seed-

syllables. Gaṇapati's mantra is recited before any other form of contemplative worship commences. Though of minor importance in the interpretation of Śrīvidyā tradition as a whole, Gaṇapati has the same distinctive role in Śrīvidyā ritual that he has in other Hindu ritual contexts. As Lord of Beginnings and the Remover of Obstacles, Gaṇapati is a significant ritual figure in all types and at all levels of Śrīvidyā worship.

In the case of Bālātripurasundarī the pure seed-syllable configuration is maintained and the mantra itself is formed from the bījākṣara elements of the mahāṣoḍaśī. It appears in two units thus: (1) **oṃ aiṃ klīṃ sauḥ** (2) **sauḥ klīṃ aiṃ**; its repetition of syllables in reverse order draws another parallel to the construction of mahāṣoḍaśī. The dhyānaśloka describing the physical form (sthūlarūpa) of Bālā while usually preceding the mantra's repetition is not included in any of the forms of worship associated with fully mature Lalitā---there is, as it were, no designated place for Bālātripurasundarī in either physical or mantric forms in any Śrīvidyā worship employing the śrīcakra and incorporating the śrīvidyā.[108] Thus for kādimata followers maintaining the supremacy of the ṣoḍaśī, Śrīvidyā's mantric hierarchy culminates with ṣoḍaśī and is followed by pañcadaśī, bālātripurasundarī and the ever present mahāgaṇapati mantra. Without textual references it is not

possible to determine if the *hādimata* includes the worship of Bālātripurasundarī though her role like that of Gaṇapati is probably identical to *kādimata*.

Śrīvidyā adepts may worship other Hindu deities according to the broader traditions of *mantraśāstra* and it is a common belief among living adepts that initiation into the *śrīvidyā* "automatically qualifies" the adept for any other mantra. This opinion undoubtedly arises as part of the view which asserts *śrīvidyā*'s superiority over all other mantras and the subordination of all gods to Lalitā. Many living adepts have gained a public reputation for their mastery of *mantraśāstra* rather than strictly as a *śrīvidyā* worshipper.

Yet another form of the *pañcadaśākṣarī* is associated with Lalitā Mahātripurasundarī as she is described in her *dhyānaśloka* though it is not found in the tradition of twelve *vidyās* and Śrīvidyā teachers.[109] The so-called *saubhāgyavidyā pañcadaśākṣarī* is not frequently found in *paddhatis* but is noteworthy for the term *saubhāgya*, "prosperous", the attribute most commonly associated with Lalitā.[110] Śrīvidyā is sometimes referred to as the *Saubhāgya Sampradāya*, literally the "Tradition of Prosperity" but more properly, the Tradition which focuses on the *saubhāgya* aspect of the goddess. The structure of the *saubhāgyavidyā* is in four units (*kūṭas*) and includes the

seven seed-syllables appended to the *kādividyā* in ritual formulations of *śrīcakra pūjā*: (1) **oṃ aiṃ hrīṃ śrīṃ** (2) **aiṃ ka e ī la hrīṃ** (3) **klīṃ ha sa ka ha la hrīṃ** (4) **sauḥ sa ka la hrīṃ**.[111]

The seven additional seed-syllables or, more frequently, the four of the first *kūṭa* are themselves appended as a single unit to numerous ritual mantras and invocations as introductory elements. Thus in the *śrīcakra pūjā* during the identification of sounds with parts of body (i.e., *nyāsa*) either the complete set of seven or the abbreviated four syllables are repeated before each line. It is common to see, for example, simply the number seven written before these *nyāsa* mantras. This indicates the use of the seven *bījākṣaras* before it as in the common *matṛkanyāsa*: 7 **aṃ kaṃ khaṃ gaṃ ghaṃ nan aṃ anguṣṭhāyaṃ namaḥ**; or the four as in the *karaśuddhinyāsa*: 4 **aṃ namaḥ**.[112] These sets of *bījākṣaras*, while not associated with a form of the *śrīvidyā mūlamantra*, are essential elements of the esoteric mantra system incorporated into the larger ritual tradition. The seven seed-syllables are associated with conferring prosperity and with making auspicious other sets of mantras. This would explain why they are appended to the *pañcadaśākṣarī* in ritual contexts but omitted during *japa* and how this unusual variation on the fifteen syllable mantra is generated. Contemporary lineages differ on the

question of the appropriateness of these appendages to the nyāsa mantras.

Another form of the śrīvidyā that appears to be a later development is the so-called sādi form. In this configuration the mantra begins with the syllable sa, that is, the śaktikūṭa replaces the vāgbhavakūṭa. Since it is mentioned in the TT the sādi was known from a relatively early period but does not appear as one of the forms in the tradition of twelve sages. While the Bahvṛcha Upaniṣad also mentions this form there is no historical evidence that it was anything other than a theoretical formulation designed to complement the kādi and hādi schemes. Without ritual handbooks devoted to its description or practice, or historical figures claiming allegiance to it, there is no indication of its being part of the historical or living practical tradition.

K. Secrecy and the Articulation of the Mantra

All Śrīvidyā sources maintain a degree of secrecy regarding the explicit utterance of the mantra and, as it has been shown, it is common to find the vidyā encoded in technical or mystical language. Śrīvidyā sources, however, do not employ or refer to the use of the so-called sandhyabhāṣa or "twilight language" common to Buddhist sources.[113] The mantra is not couched in metaphors or poetic simile but rather is expressed through specific

technical vocabulary.

Only in ritual manuals does one see the forms of the mantra actually written as they have been presented here. These texts have only been meant for practical use within closed circles of initiates. Many contemporary adepts object to any overt form being either verbalized or printed, fearing its misuse by the uninitiated and a violation of the tenets of secrecy. Adepts do not ordinarily verbalize the mantra in a manner that would allow others to hear it unless it is during ritual or under private instructional circumstances. So long as texts circulate only among the initiated and ritual prescriptions restrict the presence of non-initiates, the secrecy of the actual mantra is maintained. This, however, is not usually the case and the astute listener can hear the "secret sounds" of the Śrīvidyā in many public and semi-private ritual situations in contemporary south India.

One theological reason for the mantra's secrecy is immediately apparent: it is the subtle nature of the Absolute, not merely a name or representation of it; to utter it is to enunciate the source of power that creates, maintains and destroys the universe. Repeating the mantra aloud in the presence of the uninitiated is considered potentially dangerous because of the possibility that it might be used without proper instruction and qualification.

Despite the belief that the mantra becomes fully "empowered" only through initiation and has liberative power only when its esoteric meanings are comprehended, it is part of a meta-linguistic reality and as such contains an inherent power.[114] By its being identical with the Vedic praṇava and gāyatrī and thus a form of the Absolute Brahman, the mantra is an expression of power that can be used or misused for any material or spiritual end.[115]

The mantra in the Śrīvidyā tradition's view of the attainment of liberation combines grace, individual self-effort and what might be called "magic". The "magical" quality of the mantra is its inherent power derived from its being the subtle emanation of the goddess and thus an embodiment of Brahman. It can bring about extraordinary events, ones that defy all normal and conventional modes of understanding. The mantra can move mountains in addition to effecting personal liberation.

The guru, an embodiment of both Śiva and Śakti, is the primary source for bringing out the mantra's latent power. The student is not only dependent upon the teacher for providing the mantra's esoteric meaning but for empowering the sounds themselves. Since the mantra is itself in a direct chain of transmission from Śiva and Śakti, the guru provides what no written source can: the living embodiment of the mantra's meaning and power. Perhaps no point is more

constantly reiterated in Tantric traditions; accomplishment is the result only of practice, practice that must be guided and blessed by a qualified teacher whose own powers derive from a continuity of lineage.

Thus the initiation into the śrīvidyā is an act of the guru's grace on whom the student's continuing welfare and achievement are dependent. The necessity of the guru's grace does not mean that individual self effort is vitiated but that without this personal instruction there can be no claim to a continuity of spiritual power that has followed the mantra from its eternal source. The goal of mantra sādhana finally depends upon the initiate's own contemplative efforts and response to the guru's instructions. Thus Śrīvidyā combines three distinct but interrelated soteriological perspectives: "magic" (i.e., the inherent power of mantras), grace (e.g., in the empowerment gained by worship of the deity and through the guru) and self-effort, all of which balance an active form of theism and devotionalism with a non-dualistic interpretation of the Absolute Brahman.

1. *Tripurātāpinī Upaniṣad*, v.26, cf., Warrier translation, p.8.

2. That is, when interpreted as a genitive *tatpuruṣa* compound. See *LSN*, n.1, Ṣastry trans., p.39 for a discussion of the meanings of Śrī according to Bhāskararāya.

3. Originally appearing in *Oriens* 16 (1963), pp.244-297, reprinted in J. Gonda, *Selected Studies*, Presented to the author by the staff of the Oriental Institute, Utrecht University on the occasion of his 70th birthday, Vol.IV, History of Ancient Indian Religion, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975, pp.248-301. Citation is of Woodroffe's remark on p.252. Hereafter cited as "Gonda, 'The Indian Mantra'".

4. *LSN*, n.786, cf.Sastry, p.302.

5. Its source may well be *Kulārṇava Tantra*, 17.14. See for an elaborate discussion of this etymology, Gonda, "The Indian Mantra", p.252, in the edition cited above.

6. Sastry, p.16.

7. See Gonda, "The Indian Mantra", p.283.

8. See Bhāskararāya on *LSN*, n.227-228, Sastry, p.127.

9. Bhāskararāya's legendary biography in oral traditions relates many instances of his mastery of *mantraśāstra* and the establishment of his reputation through this type of knowledge. Contemporary traditions offer many comparable examples, see Part Two for details.

10. Cf., Bhāskararāya on *LSN*, n.228.

11. "Agastya" of "Gāyatrī" Mandali, Madras, January, 1985.

12. *Tripurātāpinī Upaniṣad* is included in A.G. Krishna Warrier's translation of Śākta Upanisads; see *The Śākta Upaniṣads*, trans., A.G. Krishna Warrier. Adyar Library: Adyar, Madras, 1967. The popular edition of the text is in: *The Śākta Upaniṣads*, ed., A. Mahadeva Sastri. Adyar Library: Adyar, Madras, 1950. A version including a previously unaccounted for commentary by Rāmānanda the Samayin was discovered in the Adyar Library Mss. Collection. This too has been consulted. Regarding the twelve sages of Śrīvidyā, different texts provide different lists. Cf., the minor variations from the *LSN* version (in Bhāskararāya's commentary on n.238) with that of *Jñānārṇava Tantra*.

13. Sastry, pp.130-131.

14. For references to Lopamudrā see the beginning of *LSN*.

15. An opinion expressed by "Agastya" of "Gāyatrī" Mandali among others.

16. See *YH*,2.14, p.95, Kaviraj, second edition.

17. *NS*, pp.46-49.

18. *Śrīvidyāratnasūtras*, Introduction and verse 1.

19. *Śrīvidyāratnasūtras*, v.4.

20. *LSN*, n.6, Sastry p.47.

21. *PKS*, p.29 in the 1979 reprint edition.

22. *Yoginīhṛdayadīpikā*, 2.18.

23. The complete absence of *paddhatis* focusing on the *hādividyā* is discussed below.

24. Discussed below with reference to the presentation of the mantra in *Tripurā Upaniṣad*.

25. See Rāmeśvara on *PKS*, *dvitīyapariśistha*, 4.; *Kulārnava Tantra* also discusses the three kinds of *jápa*, see *KT*, 15.54.

26. See *YH*.1.36ff.

31. *VVR*, 1.20-21.

28. *YH*, 1.12.

29. *VVR*, 1.4., p.6.

30. See *HT*, p.93f.

31. See Gonda, "The Indian Mantra", pp.277-278.

32. Cf., *Māṇḍukyopaniṣadkārikās*, 1.1ff.

33. *VVR*.1.7. Here the reference is actually to the Vedic *gāyatrī* which is implied to be the same as the *praṇava*. See Bhāskararāya's remarks to that effect cited below.

34. *VVR*, 1.7, p.7.

35. *VVR*, 2.60-61, pp.37-39.

36. See Rāmeśvara on *PKS*, 1.31 and Lakṣmīdhara on *SL*, v.32f; also see below, *Part* Two, remarks by contemporary adepts of "Gāyatrī" and other Mandalis.

37. Bhāskararāya says as much in his commentary on *Tripurā Upaniṣad*, v.8 where he says, "In the *Tripurātāpinī* [*Upaniṣad*] it has been clearly stated that the Gayatrī [*mantra*] designates the original knowledge [or mantra, *ādividyā*]..."

38. *Tripurātāpinī Upaniṣad*, v.7, see Warrier edition, p.3.

39. *TTU*, v.13, see Warrier edition, p.4.

40. *TTU*, v.15, see Warrier edition, p.5.

41. For a concise and accurate explanation of the basic principles of *kuṇḍalinī yoga* see *HT*, pp.163-180.

42. See *JT*, chapters 11 and 12.

43. In most contemporary lineages rituals repeated as obligations are not usually duplicated when both Vedic and Tantric versions exist. In the case of *dvija* caste initiates the Vedic version is retained and the Tantric parallel foregone since it is believed that the Vedic rite subsumes the Tantric. I have never encountered a situation in which the Tantric rite is retained and the Vedic version made optional. This is usually explained as the fulfillment of a *nityakarma* in which the Vedic rite or mantra has precedence due to its antiquity. The Tantric version is *nitya* only on non-*dvija* caste initiates.

44. Basham, A. L., *The Wonder That Was India*. New York: Grove Press, 1959, p.162.

45. See Gonda, "The Indian Mantra", the first example is cited on p.263, the second on pp.292-293.

46. Cf., examples cited in Gonda, "The Indian Mantra", p.279, ftn.3, especially his remarks regarding Kanada who gives a systematic exposition of Vaisesika interpretations and says that muttering mantras is necessary for gaining the objects of desire.

47. Gonda, "The Indian Mantra", p.279.

48. Adept of the "Guru" Mandali, Madurai, April, 1985.

49. See *PKS*, *dīkṣāvidhi*, for details.

50. This is explained in more detail in the Introduction to the translation of *Tripurā Upaniṣad* at the beginning of Part Three (Appendix One).

51. Bhāskararāya refers to this verse at many points in his works, cf., *VVR*, 1.7.; see also K.R. Venkataraman's remarks in the article entitled, "Śakti Cult in South India" in Vol.IV of *The Cultural History of India*, edited by a board of editors of the Rāmakrishna Institute, Rāmakrishna Mission: Calcutta, reprint ed. 1983, pp.252-259.

52. *VVR*, 1.7.

53. Cf., Venkataraman, cited above, p.257, ftn.7.

54. Cf., Naṭānandanātha's *Cidvalli* on *KKV* cited in Venkataraman, p.257, ftn.7. On *kāmakalā* see *HT*, p.145f.

55. *PKS*, 1.30, p.42.

56. *PKS*, 1.30, p.42.

57. According to this symbolic pattern, *k* = *krodhiṣa* = *śiva* = *śrīkaṇṭha* = *a*, the first letter of Sanskrit and, *ī* = *lakṣmī*, etc., see *VVR*, 1.9-11 for one full set of these identifications.

58. See *HT*, p.65 for a list of the *daśamahāvidyās*.

59. *VVR*, 1.12-13.

60. See *VVR*, 1.36 for the first example and 1.38 for the second.

61. *VVR*, 1.37 for the first example and 1.39 for the second.

62. *VVR*, 2.54-55.

63. *VVR*, 2.67-68, 2.73, pp.55-56. This explanation in *VVR* follows the outline of the six *arthas* given in *YH*, 2.24ff.

64. *VVR*, 2.74-80, pp.60-64.

65. *VVR*, 2.81.

66. *VVR*, 2.82-83.

67. *VVR*, 2.85, p.77.

68. *VVR*, 2.102, p.90.

69. *VVR*, 2.109.

70. Cf., *VVR*, 2.133; the chart is based on *VVR*, 2.121-126 and 2.128-130.

71. For other examples of these types of *gāyatrīs* and a brief explanation of them see *HT*, p.123f.

72. See *PKS*, 3.5 and Rāmeśvara's remarks.

73. See Bhāskararāya on *Tripurā Upaniṣad*, Verse 8.

74. *Tripurā Upaniṣad*, v.8f; see the full translation below.

75. Bhāskararāya on *Tripurā Upaniṣad*, v.9.

76. Bhāskararāya on *Tripurā Upaniṣad*, v.9. For the remark on the superiority of *kādi* see the *Setubandha*, 1.8. Here Bhāskararāya says that of mantras *śrīvidyā* is supreme and among the versions of the *śrīvidyā*, the *kādi* is supreme. Thus *hādi* is rejected as equal in the explanation offered in *NSA*, a *kādimata* text as Bhāskararāya asserts.

77. See the translation for details. Bhāskararāya explains the act of substitution in his commentary, that is, the way the words six, seven and *vahni* are interpreted to mean the syllables **ha**, **sa** and **ka**.

78. See *SL*, v.12ff.

79. Punyānanda does explicitly make clear his commitment to the use of *hadi* in *KKV*, v.18.

80. This remark initially made by "Agastya" of the "Gāyatrī" Mandali was later independently confirmed by at least four other adepts.

81. See *Setubandha* on *YH*, 2.14.

82. *Saubhāgyabhāskara* on *LSN*, n.25, Sastry, p.51.

83. Cf., *LSN*, n.391, n.587.

84. Bhāskararāya on *LSN*, n.88 says (under *mūlamantrātmika*), "*Mūla*, root, this is the fifteen syllable mantra, *pañcadaśī*...". See Sastry, p.86.

85. Bhāskararāya notes on *LSN*, n.3 that in some cases the addition of *śrīm* comprises the sixteenth letter of the *ṣodaśī* and that the *śrīvidyā* has both fifteen and sixteen syllable configurations (see *LSN*, n.7).

86. See the translation of *Tripurā Upanisadbhāṣya*.

87. *VVR*, 2.163.

88. A very similar sentiment is expressed, for example, in *PKS* 1.30, (pp.42-43) in which the importance of giving *dīkṣa* to only intelligent disciples is emphasized.

89. Kaivalyāśrama quoting the *RY* on *SL*, v.8., p.94.

90. Cf., *PKS*, *prathama khanda*, which, along with Rāmeśvara's commentary, explains in detail the requirements for guru and disciple.

91. See Rāmānanda on *Tripurā Upaniṣad*, Introduction, p.4f.

92. *Ṛjuvimarśinī* on *NSA*.1.8.

93. In this sense the notion of the efficacy of the ritual and the use of the mantra is not unlike the general concept of Vedic tradition in the period of the *Brāhmanas*. Tantrism seems to be harkening back, as it were, to a time when ritual and mantric powers were in a direct causal relationship to effects in the natural and social worlds. According to this world view, doing the correct ritual and following the prescriptions to the letter provided a guaranteed outcome. Dissatisfaction with this rather mechanical correspondence of natural and social forces with supernatural and ritual counterparts is, at least to some measure, responsible for the emergence of the later speculative views recorded in the early Upanisads and by other non-Vedic oriented traditions.

94. On the acquisition of mundane and supernormal abilities see *PKS*, 1.13 which mentions the *siddhi* of *añja*, that is, to bless and punish others, and Rāmeśvara on *PKS*, 1.9 (p.28) where he says that all *siddhis* come as the result of this mantra, and that even though there is only one cause, the mantra, it is capable of producing many effects.

95. It should be noted that the *siddhis* beginning with *anima*, the power to become infinitesimally small, are the first the *upāsaka* gains. The design of the *śrīcakra* supports this idea by identifying these *siddhis* on it outermost gates, another indication of their relative

inferiority in the ritual process. The accomplishment of these spiritual and material powers has always been a subject of great debate within Śrīvidyā tradition. While their literal acquisition is not questioned, their importance in accomplishing the "higher" aim of liberation is continuously debated. Many adepts maintain that there should be no overt use of any acquired power since this distracts the adept and "drains" his spiritual "account"; others argue that the use of *siddhi* is a natural extension of *sādhana* and convinces the skeptical of the power of the *vidyā*.

96. See p.200 of Kaviraj's second edition.

97. All *paramparas* list their own gurus in succession and attempt to trace themselves back to one of Śrīvidyā's twelve sages, particularly Kāmeśvara and Lopamudrā. Curiously, some while practicing only the Kāmeśvara lineage form of the mantra, still maintain that their lineage descends from one of the other gurus. Rāmeśvara commenting on *PKS*, 1.9 defines *sampradāya* (see p.27) and says that one gains all *siddhis* only through tradition and confidence (or faith, *visvāsa*) in contemplative practice. He also notes that the *mantra* is capable of influencing any natural phenomena or social situation; in essence, he maintains that an initiate experienced in the use of the *śrīvidyā* can do anything.

98. See Rāmeśvara on *PKS*, 1.1., p.14.

99. See also Rāmeśvara on *PKS*, 1.15-19, pp.30-33. One observes here a remarkable similarity to the so-called *catusthaya sādhana* of Saṅkara, a point that is not lost on contemporary adepts with links to the Sāṅkara tradition. For a discussion of *dīkṣā* see *HT*, pp.71-89.

100. See Rāmeśvara's remarks on *PKS*, 1.20 (p.35) where he disagrees with this policy and suggests that when a teacher deviates from tradition it is the student's responsibility to tell the guru. The disciple must continuously question a guru's adherence to tradition and with the permission of the teacher the student can even correct and revise the guru's instruction. This notion is actually foreign to the majority of traditionalists who, by revering their teachers as Śiva, cannot imagine that this incarnate deity could err.

101. Rāmeśvara on *PKS*,2.1. says that without *dīksā* one is not entitled to do *śrīvidyā upāsana*. The great *mantra* or *mahāvidyā*, he says, is either the *pañcadaśī* or *sodaśī* and *Rāmeśvara* appears to express no preference. *PKS* discusses the mantra only in terms of *kādi* and *hādi* and not as

pañcadaśī or *sodaśī*---the *pañcadaśī* is obviously the form assumed for *ritual prescriptions*. Rāmeśvara also offers the meaning of *mahāvidyā* as Lalitā, but either interpretation secures it *the preeminent* place, in his view, in the mantric hierarchy.

102. See the *dīkṣāvidhi* of the *PKS* for details.

103. For an elaboration on these purificatory rites see the Van Hoens section in *HT* as well as Gupta on *pūjā*.

104. See Rāmeśvara on *PKS*,2.1. where he says here that Gaṇapati fulfills this common role of remover of obstacles. The mantra of ganapati, unlike the *śrīvidyā*, has a semantic meaning. It reads: **oṃ śrīṃ hrīṃ glīṃ glauṃ gaṃ gaṇapataye varavarada sarvajagan me vasamānaya svāhā.**

105. See the *NS*, p.10.

106. It should be noted that living traditions in south India have almost entirely forsaken initiation into the Bālātripurasundarī mantra. This subject is taken up in some detail in Part Two.

107. In fact the Bālā mantra is mentioned only in *PKS* and *NS* while other earlier handbooks, including the *Saubhāgyaratnākāra*, omit it completely. It is possible that the mantra is a late historical development, part of a larger effort to elaborate and complete the theoretical aspects of Śrīvidyā *sādhana*.

108. The usual *dhyānaśloka* of Bālātripurasundarī reads: **aruṇakiraṇajālairañcitāsābakāśā vidhṛta japapatīkapustakābhītahastā/ itarakaravarādhyā phuhlakahlarasanstha nivasatu hṛdi bālā nityakalyāṇaśīlā//** It translates: "Let the Youthful One dwell in the heart, She whose virtue is always true, who is established in the sounds of expansion, who bears in her hands the fearless scripture, and recites [the mantra of the goddess]; she who maintains the appearance of a fawn, who is arrayed in a net of red beaming splendor."

109. See the section on the *sthūla* aspect for this *dhyānaśloka* and translation.

110. These manuscripts were shown to me by an adept of the "Ānanda" Mandali in Madras, January, 1985.

111. See the handbook bearing the title *Mantravidānam*, edited by Aṇṇā, published in Sanskrit and Tamīl, Ramakrishna Matha: Madras, 1981, p.83. The mantra and *dhyānaśloka* appear here in a slightly different form than those private manuscripts I have seen in Madras.

112. See "Aṇṇā's" *paddhati*, p.18 for the details of *matṛkanyāsa* and p.22 for the *karaśuddhinyāsa*. Both rituals are portions of the *śrīcakra pūjā* in which parts of the body are identified with letters of the Sanskrit alphabet which are, in turn, identified with parts of the *śrīcakra*.

113. Cf., *HT*, p.104.

114. Unlike conventional speech which falls into the *vaikharī*, or mundane category, Śāktas consider mantras an articulation at the *madhyamā* level.

115. This point is made by Rāmeśvara on *PKS*, 1.9, p.28. He here notes again the efficacy of the mantra to produce tangible results.

Part One
Chapter Seven
Śrīcakra: The Transcendent Aspect of Devī

A. Introductory Remarks

> When She, the Supreme Śakti, out of her own will [assumes] the form of the Universe, observing her own self effusion (*sphurattama*), the cakra emerges.[1]

The symbolism of the *śrīcakra* is, along with the *śrīvidyā*, the most elaborately discussed theological topic in Śrīvidyā tradition. Visually it is perhaps, as Goudriaan has observed, the most famous configuration in all Hindu Tantrism.[2] Yet its interpretation has remained obscure to the majority of Śāktas as has its specialized worship to the majority of Hindus. These two aspects of the *śrīcakra*, its symbolic interpretation and its ritual worship, are best treated separately---an approach assumed by the *Yoginīhṛdaya* and by contemporary adepts in south India.[3]

The focus of this chapter's discussion will parallel the tradition's own symbolic focus: the *śrīcakra* is the primary cosmological symbol representing Śakti as the Supreme Principle, particularizing (*kalā*) herself in the form of the created universe. The *śrīcakra*'s microcosmic form is the human body and as a macrocosmic symbol represents the essence of all physical, mental and phonic phenomena.

The *śrīcakra* or *śrīyantra* is of uncertain historical origins though there is evidence of its presence within established Hindu temples in south India from about the sixth century.[4] Also commonly called the *śrīyantra*, that is, "the *yantra* of the goddess Śrī" or "the *yantra* of prosperity", the *śrīcakra* is not usually referred to as a *maṇḍala* (literally, circle).[5] Details describing the methods for its drawing and its symbolism are discussed in textual sources only from the period of the *Vāmakeśvara Tantra*, that is, from around the same period as its appearance in southern temples.[6] It seems certain, however, that the *śrīcakra* must have emerged in its invenerate form much earlier than these written and historical references indicate. Precisely when and where it first appeared and by whom it was composed is entirely unknown. Śrīvidyā tradition restricts itself to mythological and metaphysical descriptions of the cakra and gives no historical accounts of its appearance. Unlike the *śrīvidyā*, the *śrīcakra*'s forms are not attributed to sages or demi-gods who received them from Śiva or Śakti. It is, from the traditional perspective, the "original" cosmic form in which the universe has come forth. Historically, however, there is no verifiable textual or epigraphical evidence of its presence before the sixth century.

Śrīvidyā traditionalists claim that the *śrīcakra*, like

the śrīvidyā, is referred to in ancient Vedic texts. The passages they cite, however, unfortunately offer no verifiable literary evidence.[7] Adepts maintain that these references are esoteric and that the Vedic seers have deliberately concealed the cakra in order to protect the unqualified; the meanings of these esoteric passages can be brought to light to only by a qualified teacher.

Like other yantras, the śrīcakra was developed by specialists to fulfill private ritual and speculative needs and while there is no substantive evidence, it would seem that the actual configuration was conceived together with a significant amount of its symbolic intent intact. The coherence of the cakra's ritual symbolism is far too consistent for it to have been superimposed over a pre-existing configuration.

The śrīcakra's private ritual use has always overshadowed its public worship and its interpretation presupposes the oral traditions of Śrīvidyā's lineages. As a yantra, it conforms to Stella Kramrisch's general definition:

> A Yantra is a geometrical contrivance by which any aspect of the Supreme Principle may be bound (yantṛ, to bind; from the root 'yam') to any spot for the purpose of worship. It is an artiface in which the ground (bhumi) is converted into the extent of the manifest universe.[8]

Kramrisch has in mind yantras used for temple

construction, that is, as symbols of the metaphysical plan upon which temples are based. This general notion also applies to the śrīcakra inasmuch as it too has served as a model for certain later temples and religious structures though it was not conceived for such purposes.[9] Śrīvidyā tradition, however, regards the śrīcakra not as one particular metaphysical blueprint among others but as the source of all yantras: the śrīcakra is the model of the universe reflecting the original structure of creation.

At the first level of interpretation the śrīcakra is a yantra in the classic sense; it is a metaphysical model that parallels the form it embodies. Yet it is not only the blueprint of the original creative act but the very form creation has subtlely assumed. In addition, the śrīcakra is more than a description of creation since it may serve as a map which, along with the proper instructions, shows the way back to this creative source. Like all maps its graphic forms must be read according to specified patterns of meaning, which in this case are so specialized as to require initiated instruction. The adept charts the path back to the origins of being by interpreting the cakra's cosmological significance.

But unlike a map which merely represents reality, the śrīcakra is identified with that reality: it is not only a depiction of reality's form but its content made

representational. This point is crucial to further analysis: each part of the cakra is itself the manifestation of reality it represents. If the *śrīvidyā* is the phonic emanation of Brahman then the *śrīcakra* is, as it were, the shape the *śrīvidyā* assumes in the creation process. As a visual projection of creation it is the subtle form of manifested reality that is paralleled phonically in the mantra.

The *śrīcakra*'s form is not intended to represent all the various constituents of the visible, material world: it is, rather, the world emerging in its essential aspects (*kalās*) particularized from the amorphous Brahman. As Śivānanda notes, the *śrīcakra* is not merely an external form of the goddess but is identical with her. Since it is the goddess' form and substance it is also capable of yielding, like the goddess herself, all imaginable desires and powers. These achievements, however, are contingent upon the adept realizing the metaphysical identity of his own body and soul with the *śrīcakra* and *śrīvidyā*.[10] Puṇyānanda suggests a similar idea when he says there is no difference between the supreme deity and the *śrīcakra*; at the cakra's center, he says, is seated Śiva, the original guru, who along with the goddess creates the lineages of teachers.[11] Thus to learn the meaning of the *śrīcakra*'s elements is to gain access to its creative power; the cakra is both a representation of

creation and the primal force behind creation's becoming manifest. The śrīcakra, Vidyānanda remarks, is the clear medium in which the goddess is reflected, it is the form of Śakti as well as a reflection (vimarśa) of her. Thus, he concludes, the one who meditates on the cakra is capable of achieving any wish since it is the reflection of all material and spiritual powers.[12]

Śrīvidyā traditionalists do not disagree concerning the identification of the śrīcakra with the beneficent goddess or its power to confer worldly and spiritual aims. The śrīcakra's configuration, however, is not without controversy. Variations in its physical construction are part of sectarian and theological differences deserving more careful scrutiny. The sectarian interpretation, for example, of the Samaya school in which the usual form of the śrīcakra is turned "upside down" or the variations in the cakra's "three circles" (vṛttatraya) referred to by Bhāskararāya are best appreciated in light of the configuration's catholic interpretation. The figure of the śrīcakra on the following page (figure one) is the one most commonly referred to by historical and modern traditionalists. It is the reference for our basic analysis and follows the description of the dhyānaśloka found commonly in modern ritual handbooks:

> [The central] bindu, [the inner triangle

> called the] *trikona*, [the sub-cakra of eight triangles called the] *vasukona* [and the two sets of] ten [sub-triangles] conjoined [that follow the *vasukona*]; *manvaśra* [the sub-cakra of fourteen triangles] is joined to the serpentine (*nāga*) [eight lotus] petals [and to these] the sixteen [lotus petals] and the three circles and the three palaces of the earth [that make up the outer gateways]: this is *śrīcakra* of the supreme deity.[13]

This *dhyānaśloka*, like the verse describing Lalitā's physical (*sthūla*) form, is designed as a description of the aspect deemed suitable for worship. This particular verse, however, while serving its primary purpose as a succinct descriptive definition, is not usually included in ritual worship. It assumes a complete familiarity with the actual arrangement of the cakra's components and leaves aside any symbolic meanings. The verse it appears was meant merely to describe the cakra's "original" form. It follows the so-called *sṛṣṭhikrama* or "creation method", beginning with the central point of the figure, the *bindu*, and proceeding outward by listing the *śrīcakra*'s nine sub-cakras.

The *śrīcakra*'s central portion is its trademark; the intersection of five over four major triangles producing the five sets of minor triangles, themselves called cakras. These sets of minor triangles forming cakras are in the present contexts called "sub-cakras" inasmuch as they are the minor units of the *śrīcakra*. There should be no confusion: the term cakra, literally "wheel", can mean any

identifiable pattern of figures or configuration which when taken as a single unit is a center of specific properties. Thus the groups of triangles formed from the larger intersection of the nine major triangles are referred to as "cakras" when discussed as single entities. Within Śrīvidyā tradition little attention is actually given to the symbolism of the major triangles; speculations focus on the sub-cakras emerging from the major triangles' intersection. The two sets of sixteen and eight lotus-shaped petals as well as the lines forming the outer gateways are also considered sub-cakras.

The intersecting major triangles thus create five triangular sub-cakras to which are added the three sub-cakras of petals and lines. The central bindu provides the ninth element and is referred to as the baindava cakra.[14] In these sub-cakras, taken as individual units each with its own name, characteristics and forms of power, the adept sees creation emerging in its essence and particularity. From the cosmological perspective the movement from the central bindu towards the outer gateways (bhūpura) symbolizes increasingly more manifest and mundane forms of reality. With each sub-cakra the ordinary world becomes more explicit and recognizable; the process being a gradual devolution from Brahman. The śrīcakra's major triangles while not a focus of speculation have an important overarching symbolism

which should not be overlooked.

According to Śrīvidya tradition the śrīcakra's basic intersection of five and four major triangles represents the union of the Goddess Śakti and Śiva; the five downward facing major triangles are symoblic of Śakti while the four upward facing indicate Śiva. This union is often viewed as sexual. As the Brahmāṇḍapūraṇa states:

> The śrīcakra, the body of Śiva (śivayorvapuḥ), is established by the nine cakras, [that is,] by the four cakras of Śiva and by the five cakras of Śakti.[15]

In the bindu, Śakti and Śiva are in a state of absolute unity, not merely in dichotomous union as the intersecting nine major triangles represent. The intersecting major triangles have both an explicit and esoteric sexual symbolism. The five downward facing Śakti triangles are in the "aspect of desire" (kāmakalā) and represent the female organ. The four upward facing Śiva triangles are symbolic of the liṅga and the sexual embrace formed by the intersection of the five triangles meeting four.

The five Śakti triangles are also symbolic of the primordial form of the five elements that make up the created world, that is, earth (pṛthivī), water (āp), air (vāyu), fire (agni) and space (ākāśa). The four Śiva triangles, also called Agni triangles, symbolize the

principles that give shape to the material world; their function is to provide a metaphysical basis upon which the material universe is organized. These four Agni (or Fire) principles are known by their technical names: (1) māyā, the power of deception that permits the one to appear as many; (2) śuddha vidyā, pure knowledge in the form of mantra that permeates all things as the phonic source of being; (3) maheśvara or the Great Lord (Śiva) who stabalizes the creative flux of Śakti and (4) sadāśiva, the eternal Śiva who is the basis upon which all the rest are established.[16]

The five intersecting four triangles are at the root of two of the most basic cosmological functions, namely, creation and dissolution. As the Yoginīhṛdaya states:

> The fivefold Śakti [cakras] are [identified with] creation and the fourfold Agni [i.e., Śiva cakras] are [identified with] dissolution; the [nine sub-cakras] arise from the conjunction of the five Śaktis and the four Vanhis [i.e., Śivas].[17]

The five Śakti triangles are further considered the source of the five material components of the human body, namely, flesh, fat, skin, blood and bone, while the four Siva triangles are the give rise to marrow, semen, breath (prāṇa) and life (jīva).[18]

The focus of the śrīcakra's interpretation, however, centers not on the major triangles themselves but on their resulting intersections, that is, on the sub-cakras of minor

triangles, two sets of lotus petals and lines forming the outer gateways. The nine sub-cakras including the sets of lotus petals and the outer gateways are also identified in groups with Śakti and Śiva. The five sub-cakras of minor triangles are associated with Śakti while the two sets of lotus petals, the outer gateways (*bhūpura*) and, according to some interpretations, the three circles surrounding the sixteen lotuses are Śiva's. These two groups of Śiva and Śakti sub-cakras are then interidentified in order to emphasize their intrinsic identity and union. The process links the Śiva sub-cakras with the Śakti sub-cakras thusly:

Śiva sub-cakras		**Śakti sub-cakras**
Three Circles (*traivalya* or *vṛttatraya*)	=	Innermost *Trikoṇa*
Eight Petalled Lotus (*aṣṭadalapadma*)	=	*Vasukoṇa*
Sixteen Petalled Lotus (*ṣoḍasadalapadma*)	=	Two sets of 10 triangles
Outermost Gateways of Three Lines (*bhūpura*)	=	Fourteen triangles

B. *Śrīcakra*: The Symbol of Creation

For traditionalists viewing the *śrīcakra* as a represention of the creative process devolving from its original source, the analysis naturally begins at the cosmological center, the *bindu*. When the cakra is taken, as it were, as a map showing the way back to this source, the analysis proceeds in just the opposite fashion, that is, from the outermost sub-cakras towards the center.

Ritual practice tracing the map's path back to the

source of creation therefore begins in the midst of dualistic reality represented by the *śrīcakra*'s triangles, petals and outer lines. It assumes the opposite perspective from that of the creation method's cosmological description. It focuses instead on the so-called "destructive method" (*samhārakrama*). From this perspective one moves from the outermost sub-cakras towards the *bindu*, that is from dualistic and discursive reality to the focal point of non-dual, non-verbal consciousness. In the ritual process employing the destructive method (*samhārakrama*) the adept dissolves, as it were, the egoistic personality into the original source of being.

In contrast, purely cosmological and theological analysis begins at the one point from whence creation came forth, the central *bindu*, and proceeds to greater and greater forms of diversity. Both the *sṛṣṭikrama* and the *samhārakrama* methods of analyzing the *śrīcakra* serve distinctive yet interrelated purposes in Śrīvidyā's spiritual discipline. By analyzing creation as a cosmological event in which reality comes forth (*sṛṣṭikrama*) as the *śrīcakra* the adept intellectually grounds spiritual discipline. In ritual practices designed to lead back to the source of being the adept methodically dissolves (*samhārakrama*) the manifold back into the One.

The bindu at the center of the śrīcakra represents the non-differentiated state of being that preceeds manifest creation. When the bindu in its pure illuminative state (prakāśa = Śiva) emerges as a reflection (vimarśa = Śakti) in the form of everyday reality it has already assumed a "triadic" shape, that is, it has taken shape as the triangles, lotus petals and lines of the śrīcakra. This "triadic" shape represents the basic epistemological and ontological forms within the ordinary world; for example, dualistic reality consists of subjects, objects and the process of coginition.

In metaphysical terms the originally undifferentiated One is viewed as binary, Śiva and Śakti. The real nature of the śrīcakra, Śivānanda points out, is the undivided essence of Śiva and Śakti who are the source (bīja) of subject/object distinctions.[19] The unified Brahman undergoes no change to assume this binary form. It remains a single reality which, theologically speaking, has two features. The binary nature of the One reality is distinguished only at the ordinary level of epistemological dualism. From the perspective of yogic knowledge the Śrīvidyā adept maintains there is no difference whatsoever between Śiva and Śakti, the One Brahman remains intact; the transformation of the One reality to two theological forms is a cognitive act on the part of a cognizer lacking yogic

knowledge. As Bhāskararāya notes, it is the mere will of the deity that creates the universe; creation issues forth from her own being at the moment of its conception.[20]

In the Indian world-view epistemological dualism is not binary but tertiary. The cognitive process, for example, accompanies the cognizing subject and cognized object. Just as the epistemological process is considered threefold so are the material transformations of Brahman and their phonic parallels. Brahman's assumption of two theological forms involves no actual change in its nature, yet its transformation (pariṇāma) into manifest reality assumes a genuine shift into triadic forms. This transformation is, however, purely one of form and not of substance.

Śāktism accepts that the One Brahman, assuming the binary form of Śiva and Śakti, is both the material and efficient cause of the universe. Brahman never substantially changes but merely assumes gradually more mundane shapes in the process of becoming manifest. These gradual transformations are not illusory (vivarta) but actual, the product of the deliberate will of the Creator who spins creation out of its own being like a spider spins its web.[21]

Śāktas acknowledge both efficient and material causality as properties of Śakti but only material causality

as a property of Śiva. Śiva remains entirely inert, as Śākta literature says, like a corspe without his Śakti.[22] Hence in Srīvidyā, as in other Śākta traditions, the Śiva aspect is identical to Śakti from the ultimate perspective but is not associated with the conventional, creative force or the transformation (parināma) into the manifest world. Śrīvidyā traditionalists equate the male and female aspects so long as the discussion focuses on their original state of identity, that is, as Brahman (Śiva) united to the Self (ātman, Śakti). As soon as the focus shifts to the triads of dualistic reality the basic differences between Śiva and Śakti are affirmed. Śakti is given the superior position as that aspect encompassing both material and causal powers and as the Self reflecting (vimarśa) the illuiminative (prakāśa), immobile Brahman.

C. Symbolism and Interpretation of the Śrīcakra

The analysis of the śrīcakra as a cosmological symbol follows the pattern given in its dhyānaśloka, that is, beginning with the bindu, and describing the cakra according to the creation method (sṛṣṭhikrama). This method is the point of departure adopted most frequently in traditional cosmological analyses of the śrīcakra.

As Puṇyānanda states in the KKV, the supreme nature of the śrīcakra is the bindu, it is the cause of the nine sub-

cakras and the source of the initial phonic emanations of Brahman.[23] A contemporary adept summarized these views in response to the question,"What is the śrīcakra?". He said:

> The bindu alone is the śrīcakra. All the rest is just an addition. In the bindu everything is contained since it is the very form (svarūpa) of Brahman. The bindu is the true form of Śiva and Śakti since it is one and naturally the whole cakra is within it.[24]

The goddess is seated on the bindu on and the left thigh of Kāmeśvara (Śiva). There she resembles the rising sun and her three eyes are in the form of the moon, sun and fire.[25] It is from her union with Śiva, Amṛtānanda says, that this great bindu was born and from the bindu the whole universe spewed (vāma) forth.[26] The bindu's form, unlike the triangles and lines of the sub-cakras that are a reflection (vimarśa) of it, is still in the form of illumination (prakāśa). In this single point is the locus of reality, the source of the emerging triadic forms, shapes and lines.

Inherent in the bindu, the commentators point out, is its threefold nature, that is, the three capacities of Śakti, desire, knowledge and activity (icchā-, jñāna- and kriyāśaktis) embodied in the deities Vāmā, Jyeṣṭhā and Raudrī. These deities are subsumed under a fourth aspect called Ambikā and technically referred to as the śānta or "peaceful". From these come the three gradations of sound

(*paśyantī*, *madhyamā* and *vaikharī*) that are responsible for projecting the thirty six categories (*tattvas*) that make up material reality. As Bhāskararāya says,

> Even though the *bindu* cakra [in the center of the *śrīcakra* is only one point] because it has a threefold nature each [nature] respectively has three forms....The three deities created [and] not different from [her] peaceful (*śānta*) [aspect] are [the three *śaktis* of creation] *icchasakti*, *jñānaśakti* and *kriyāśakti*. The female deities (*śakti*) by name Vāma, Jyeṣthā and Raudrī [which correspond to *icchā*, *jñāna* and *kriyā* are complimented] by the three [corresponding male] forms Brahma, Viṣṇu and Rudra are created as undifferentiated from [the subsuming aspect called] Ambikā. The corresponding deities of speech (*vāgdevatā*) called *paśyantī*, *madhyamā* and *vaikharī* are created undifferentiated from [the subsuming aspect called] supreme (*parā*). This is the meaning [of the threefold nature of the *bindu* cakra divided in three ways].[27]

This initial projection of the *bindu* takes the form of the central triangle (*trikoṇa*).[28]

According to Amṛtānanda the projection from *bindu* to *trikoṇa* can be seen as the manifestation of these sets of triadic deities and powers. The projection begins with inner triangle's left line and moves clockwise. Thus each element of the symbolic triads becomes identified with the lines of the *trikoṇa*:

Trikoṇa	Left	Center	Right	Bindu
Aspect of the Goddess:	Vāma	Jyeṣthā	Raudrī	Ambikā
Consort:	Brahman	Viṣṇu	Śiva	Īśvara
Function:	Creation	Maintenance	Destruction	
Aspect of Śakti:	icchā	jñāna	kriyā	
Stage of Sound:	paśyantī	madhyamā	vaikharī	parā
Consciousness State:	waking	dreaming	deep sleep	4th

It is immediately apparent that these identifications parallel those made with the three kūṭas of the śrīvidyā discussed earlier. Śrīvidyā commentators are quick to point out the correspondence of the mantra with the cakra---each is simply an aspect of the other, the mantra the goddess' subtle form, the cakra her transcedent projection as the universe. Hence the fifteen syllables of the mantra in three kūṭas are identified on the śrīcakra following the same clockwise pattern one kūṭa to a side and the ṣoḍaśī, the sixteenth syllable, identified with the bindu.

The logic of the whole system is consistent though its presentation is not. The three sides of the central triangle correspond to each of the three symbolic elements in each set of attributes; the bindu corresponds to the fourth element, or the sixteenth of fifteen. The fourth element encompasses and subsumes the previous three elements. The bindu is also identified with the sixteenth syllable of the śrīvidyā and the sixteenth "hidden" aspect (kalā) of the moon's phases; both of these "sixteenths" serve the same encompassing and subsuming function as the fourth element attached to triads.

Like most Tantric terms, bindu has many meanings, many of which are applied to the symbolism of the bindu within the śrīcakra. Bindu, for example, can refer to semen and be identified with the bindu as the liṅga of Śiva. When the

trikoṇa is identified with the *yoni* of Śakti the sexual symbolism becomes complete: Śiva and Śakti's union is not merely represented by the five intersecting four triangles but in the center of the *srīcakra* the *bindu* being joined with the central triangle. The bliss of this sexual union is analogous to the permanent spiritual bliss (*ānanda*) attained when the adept realizes the unified nature of reality. Thus the *trikoṇa* assumes the form of the *kāmakalā* or the "aspect of desire", which is usually symbolized by the human form of the female sexual organ. The ritual process of identifying the *trikoṇa* with the actual female organ is at the basis of the so-called *kāmakalā dhyāna*, or meditation on the *kāmakalā*. This practice when interpreted literally prescribes the worship of the exposed female organ as the *trikoṇa*. As a form of spiritual discipline it meets with both sharp criticism and enthusiastic support. Its supporters claim it serves to encourage yogic restraint and embody the symbolic forms while its detractors maintain that the temptations and practices are themselves morally suspect and given to misuse and misunderstanding by outsiders.

As a phonic emanation the *trikoṇa* is considered the resulting combination of the Śiva seed-syllable (*bījākṣara*) *a* and the Śakti seed-syllable *ī*, both residing in unity within the *bindu*. The grammatical result of the *a* plus *ī* combination, the Sanskrit *e*, is itself the seed-syllable of

the *trikoṇa*. Bhāskararāya points out that this letter *e* in the *devanāgari* script resembles a triangle and thus suggests the *yoni*.[29]

Viewed in yet another way the *bindu* is identified with the sixteenth vowel, the *visarga*, usually represented as *aḥ*. The *visarga* encompasses all the other vowels which are also considered forms of Śakti just as the consonants are forms of Śiva. The *trikoṇa* is then identified with the remaining fifteen vowels; in the *śrīcakra pūjā* these fifteen vowels are placed five to a side beginning at the base and moving counterclockwise. The fifteen vowels from *a* to *aṃ* (i.e., the *anusvāra*) are also identified with the fifteen *nityās* or *tithis*, the deities of the moon's phases (*kalās*). The *visarga* according to this pattern is sixteenth *kalā* and *nityā devatā*, which is "hidden" from ordinary view. Thus the *bindu* and *trikoṇa* symbolize the devolution of sound at the mundane level of speech (i.e., the *vaikharī* level,) through the identification of the vowels, considered the first sounds of Sanskrit and the first substantive phonic emanation.[30]

While it is also evident that the *bindu* is the symbolic center of the universe, when the *śrīcakra* is considered in its three dimensional or *meru* form, it also becomes the geographical peak (*kūṭa*) of the universe. Thus the *bindu* is the seat or throne (*pītha*) of the city of *Tripurā* atop the

mythical mountain of Sumeru at the center of the universe. Bhāskararāya quoting the Rudrayāmala says:

> "Outside and beyond the countless myriads of world systems, in the centre of the ocean of nectar, more than a thousand crores in extent, in the gem-island (**ratnadvīpa**), a hundred crores in area, the lamp of the world, there is the supreme city of Srividya, three lakhs of **yojanas** in height and adorned with twenty-five walls representsing the twenty-five **tattvas**.". . .in the **Vidyāratnabhāṣya** [it] is explained as Śrīcakra.[31]

Thus in every ritual reenactment in which the individual body and the universe are identified with the śrīcakra, the bindu of the particular śrīcakra worshipped and the body of the adept become the symbolic center of the universe. Within the body the bindu is usually identified with the uppermost yogic center, the sahasradala or brahmāndhra padma at the top of the skull. The trikona is placed at the base of the spine in the lowest of the physical bodily centers (or cakras), that is, in the mūlādhara. In the course of yogic ritual meditation the two are reunited by methods including breath control, the interidentifcation of phonic essences (i.e., bījākṣaras) and the use of gestures (mudrās). Viewed macrocosmically as the center of the universe, the bindu is the locus of cosmic geography, the center of the physical universe.

When considered as one of the nine sub-cakras the bindu is called sarvānandamāyā, that is, the one "consisting of all bliss" and the trikoṇa, sarvasiddhiprada, the one

"bestowing all perfection".32 The name of the sub-cakra refers to the achievements gained by worshipping its deities and the activities associating with a manifestation of the mundane world. Each sub-cakra also bears a name for its own presiding deity and the subordinate deities (yoginīs, that is, the female yogis) identified on its parts. The presiding deity of the bindu is the supreme aspect of Tripurā, that is, Mahātripurasundarī who presides, as it were, over all the other "presiding" deities of the sub-cakras. The yoginī of the bindu is referred to as the "supreme of the supreme secret" (parāparārahasya) and is, in fact, the same deity; the presiding deity of the trikoṇa is known as Tripurāmbikā and the fifteen yoginīs are called the "very secret" (atirahasya).33 These fifteen deities identified with the vowels of Sanskrit are the nityādevatās, the "eternal deities", presiding over the moon's phases. Bhāskararāya concurs:

> The **nityās** are the fifteen Devatās, Kameśvarī to Citrā, who preside over the fifteen days of the lunar months.34
>
> The fifteen syllables [of the śrīvidyā] known to all devotees are of the form of nityās; thus, the moon's disc, Devī and the fifteen-syllable **mantra** are one. The fifteen syllables belonging to the fifteen **kalās** also become one.35
>
> The **Tantrarāja** says, "The fifteen deities are the limbs of Lalitā who is the first [of the sixteen]; as she is endowed with these limbs she is the body, of which they are parts."36

The next expansion (prapañca) of the śrīcakra completes

the core of its symbolism; the remaining portions, in a sense, are all viewed as subordinate to the emerging eight minor triangles when combined with the *trikoṇa* and the *bindu*.

When the one triangle becomes eight, these eight minor triangles become the *vasukoṇa* sub-cakra. Just as the *bindu* is said to encompass all the remaining parts of the *śrīcakra*, so the *vasukoṇa*, at a more mundane level when taken with the *trikoṇa*, encompasses all the symbols, deities and powers of the remaining sub-cakras. The *vasukoṇa*'s presiding deity is Tripurāsiddhā and its *yoginīs* (identified one to a triangle) are called "secret" (*rahasya*). These *yoginīs* are actually the well-known "deities of speech", the *vāgdevatās*: Vāsinī, Kāmeśvarī, Modinī, Vimalā, Āruṇā, Jayanī, Sarveśvarī and Kaulinī. These eight subordinate deities are the source of the *mātṛkās*, the Little Mothers, identified with all the letters and sounds of the Sanskrit alphabet. The *mātṛkās* embody the basic linguistic structure of Sanskrit and are the first phonic emanations of Brahman at the mundane level; they include, then, not only the sixteen vowels (which come first) but the thirty-two (or thirty-five) consonants.[37] As Bhāskararāya notes:

> ...the fifty-one letters (**A** to **Kṣa**) are her form, **varṇa**, the letters, **rūpa**, indicate (her)..."Just as the supreme Śiva is twofold as Śakti and Śiva, so this Mātṛkā Devī herself shines in two. The vowels indicate one form of Śakti, the others (consonants) indicate Śiva. Thus the [Devī] of

vidyā under the form of letters indicates Śiva."[38]

The vāgdevatās are the collective source for the matṛkās identified on the remaining sub-cakras. Thus with each of the vāgdevatās is associated one of the traditional groupings of Sanskrit letters, so that with Vāsinī is associated the sixteen vowels, with Kāmeśvarī the kavarga (ka, kha, ga, gha and na), and so forth, such that the forty-eight (or fifty-two) letters are accounted for under the eight vāgdevatā yoginis. The vāgdevatās, by subsuming the matṛkās identified with speech, subordinate the remaining portions of the sub-cakras. The sub-cakras, by being associated with a particular Sanskrit letter, are nothing other than simple mātṛkā aspects of the vāgdevatās. The sounds themselves whether grouped together as the vāgdevatās or taken individually as mātṛkās identified with a part of each sub-cakra are not mere sounds. They are deities in phonic aspects subordinated to the presiding deity of the whole cakra; as substances issuing forth from this one source and gradually assuming a mundane form (such as their particular sound in Sankrit) they are aspects of consciousness, not insentient entities. As part of the śrīcakra these sounds and deities are part of a deliberate design of the macrocosmic Consciousness bringing itself into particular forms. For the Śrīvidyā traditionalist the world

issues forth in an emerging cosmic structure, the śrīcakra, in which phonic emanations and the structure itself arise in complimentary, parallel forms. Creation is an immanent form of the Creator and transcendence is measured in degrees rather than in substance.

When the trikoṇa is included, the eight minor triangles of the vasukoṇa embrace not only all the sound sources of the manifest world but all the other powers and deities associated with the śrīcakra's remaining seven sub-cakras. In these nine triangles (that is, the eight of the vasukoṇa plus the one trikoṇa) are all the powers and attributes of the nine major triangles and the nine sub-cakras formed in intersection.

Thus the eight minor triangles of the vasukoṇa and the central trikoṇa are identified with the nine Yonis (literally, wombs) which are the aspects of Śakti responsible for acquired and latent mental impressions (saṁskāras) entering into the mundane, karmic world.[39] The deities of the śrīcakra also serve to identify aspects of the personality from its source in the Self (ātman) to its more mundane and manifest aspects. The Yonis are the source of all the remaining sub-cakras, including their presiding yoginī deities, the accomplishments associated with their worship and the material and spiritual aspects of the mundane world each reflects. As Bhāskararāya says:

> The nine *Yoni* cakras...arise [from the intersection of] the two [major] Śakti triangles with one [major] Vahni [or Śiva] triangle. The three lines of each [major] triangle thus joined together are the nine lines and [produce by their intersection] the forms of angles [which number] nine only. Therefore, [it can be said that] She produces the nine *yoginīs* [identified respectively with each of the eight minor *vasukona* triangles and the inner *trikona*]. The sense expressed here is that in these nine [sub-] cakras [composed of the eight *vasukoṇas* plus the one *trikona*] are [subtlely present] the nine [sets of] *yoginīs* beginning with *prakata* [that is, all the *yoginīs* of the sub-cakras making up the *śrīcakra*] and that these [sets of *yoginīs*] are present here in the form of angles.[40]

The *vasukoṇa*'s association with the *vāgdevatās* and the nine *Yonis* gives it a crucial place in the *śrīcakra* as a portrait of creation. Creation as we know it emerges at this level of the cakra, that is, as it is understood through ordinary speech and as an emanation of sound. As Bhāskararāya remarks, all the rest of creation is a sub-set of the activity of the deities of the *vasukoṇa* and *trikoṇa*.[41] The *vasukoṇa* itself is known as the cakra which "removes all disease" (*sarvarogahara*).[42] This is explained in the words of a contemporary adept,

> This means all forms of disease but actually it refers to ignorance (*avidyā*). This is the disease that afflicts all of us and if removed we are liberated.[43]

The *vasukoṇa*'s presiding deity is Tripurasiddhā, the aspect of Tripurā that "bestows all forms of accomplishment", a seemingly appropriate name for the deity

intended to subsume those that follow.

The vasukoṇa and trikoṇa, adding up to nine triangles, also fits the patterns of symbolism seen in the śrīcakra as a whole. As nine triangles these two sub-cakras are both a microcosm of the five plus four major triangles and the nine sub-cakras that make up the complete cakra. In these nine minor triangles is the śrīcakra in its reduced form and, as Bhāskararāya notes, under special circumstances the worship of the whole śrīcakra can be taken as the worship of only these nine. He says:

> In the summarized form of the [śrīcakra] pūjā, at the time of emergency (āpatkālika) we understand from the Tantras an injunction [to perform the pūjā] merely beginning from the vasukoṇa...to the bindu.[44]

At the next stage of creation's devolution the śrīcakra assumes the form of ten triangles called the [sub-] cakra that "effects all protection" (sarvarakṣākāra); its presiding deity is known as Tripuramālinī. This sub-cakra is known less technically as the inner ten triangles (antardaśāra) in order to distinguish it from the next sub-cakra of ten triangles known as the outer ten (bahirdaśāra).[45] The two sets of ten minor triangles are usually taken as a pair though each bears its own distinctive name, presiding deity and set of yoginīs. The yoginīs of the inner ten are called nigarbhā, an esoteric

term meaning "hidden" but contrasted to *rahasya* or "secret" which suggests a greater degree of secrecy. They also bear the name *devī*, or goddess, as part of their description, suggesting that at this level of mundane reality the identifiable, anthropomorphic forms begin to emerge. The particular power and description of the deity is also the *siddhi* or form of accomplishment that its worship confers. It should be emphasized how these characteristics portray the active and worldly nature of the deities and how this sub-cakra, like those that follow it, reflects an increasingly more manifest form of reality. The names of the *yoginīs* and their meanings are listed below, they are identified in the *śrīcakra* worship in a counterclockwise pattern beginning at the base triangle:

Outer Ten Minor Triangles: **Sarvarakṣākāracakra**

	Yoginī	**Meaning and Attribute**
1.	Sarvajñā(devī)	Omniscience
2.	Sarvaśakti	All powers
3.	Sarvaiśvaryapradā	Conferring all [forms of] empowerment
4.	Sarvajñānamayī	Consisting of all knowledge
5.	Sarvavyādhivināśinī	Destroying all sickness
6.	Sarvādhārasvarūpini	Form of all Supports (an esoteric sense referring to the bodily centers according to *kundalinī* yoga)
7.	Sarvapāpaharā	Remover of all sins
8.	Sarvānandamayī	Consisting of all bliss
9.	Sarvarakṣāsvarūpinī	Form of all protection
10.	Sarvepistaphalapradā	Conferring all desired fruits

The relationship of the inner and outer sets of ten

minor triangles with the coming forth of the mundane physical world is also clear from another set of identifications. Quoting an unidentified passage from the Tantras Bhāskararāya explains how the two sets of ten minor triangles symbolize the material essence of the physical world the emerging from the more subtle phonic form:

> The two sets of ten [minor] triangles [within the *śrīcakra*] have the form of effulgence (*sphuratrupa*) which depends upon illumination (*prakāśa*) [of the] ten elements (*bhūta*) and the ten essences (*tanmātra*).[46]

This remark accounts for both sets of ten minor triangles but leads to a some confusion since there is no indication as to what Bhāskararāya means by the five "subtle" elements. Amṛtānanda remarking on *YH*, 1.16 says that the elements (*bhūta*), earth, water, fire, air and space have the nature of Śakti while their essences, the *tanmātras*, smell, taste, form, touch and sound, have the nature of Śiva. He does not make these usual five elements and their corresponding essences into ten nor does he clearly identify them with either of the sub-cakras. It would seem he has the inner set of ten in mind. The outer set, he says, has the form of effulgence (*sphurat*) while both are the forms of the senses and the their respective objects, numbering ten. He mention that the second set is the form of the deity Krodhiṣa, the Lord of Anger, identified with the letter *ka* and also with the ten Sanskrit

letters beginning with the consonant *ka*. This is repeated by Bhāskararāya without his including the consonants following *ka* but the discussion does not clarify which set of ten minor triangles Amṛtānanda associates with the elements and their essences.[47] The meaning, Amṛtānanda says, is that the two sets of ten minor triangles are in the midst of the light of the inner three cakras and as "light" have the nature of illumination (*prakāśa*) and reflection (*vimarśa*); the inner set is like a pure light and the outer set a shadow.[48] Though SrĪvidyā's historical interpreters have taken the two sub-cakras of ten minor triangles as a pair they have seemingly not agreed on the relationship of their symbolism. They have also distinguished the two sub-cakras, each with its own symbolism and meanings.

The outer ten minor triangles are known as the cakra that "accomplishes all aims" (*sarvārthasādhaka*), its presiding deity is known as Tripuraśrī and its *yoginis* are called *kulottīrṇa*, literally, "crossing beyond the *kula*". According to the *TT*, the ten triangles represent the ten vital breaths.[49] The *yoginīs*, like those of the inner ten triangles, are ritually placed on the *śrīcakra* counterclockwise from the base; their meanings reflect the emergence of increasing more worldly and mundane qualities in the universe.

Inner Ten Minor Triangles: **Sarvārthasādhakacakra**

Yoginī	Meaning and Attribute
1. Sarvasiddhipradā(devī)	Conferring all powers
2. Sarvasampatpradā	Conferring all profit
3. Sarvapriyaṅkarī	Making all beloved
4. Sarvamangalakāriṇī	Making everything auspcious
5. Sarvakāmapradā	Conferring all desires
6. Sarvaduḥkhavimocinī	Removing all suffering
7. Sarvamṛtyuprasamanī	Mitigating all [forms of] death
8. Sarvavighnanivāriṇī	Removing all obstacles
9. Sarvāṅgasundarī	Beautiful in all limbs
10. Sarvasaubhāgyadāyinī	Imparting all prosperity

The next and last set of minor triangles number fourteen and are commonly referred to by the technical term manvaśra. The sub-cakra "imparts all prosperity" (sarvasaubhāgyadāyaka), has Tripuravāsini for its presiding deity and calls its yoginīs "traditional" (sampradāya). Its triangles are sometimes identified with the fourteen sublte channels (nāḍis) of the Yogic nervous system though the more common meaning is given by Bhāskararāya. Following this view the fourteen are held to be a reflection of the two sets of ten:

> And from these [ten essences (tanmātra)] arose the fourteen, namely, the five organs of action, the five organs of knowledge and the four inner organs.[50]

These "organs" are, in fact, the physical and mental capacities that make up the human personality. They include the physical limbs, their corresponding capacities and the four aspects of the mind.[51] At the level of the manvaśra sub-cakra the plane of mundane existence is reached,

considered the substantive emanation emerging from the subtle aspects of Śakti and a reflective form of those aspects directly preceeding it.

The yoginīs of the sub-cakra are specifically referred to as śaktis, powers, and each yoginī's name specifies the accomplishment (siddhi) associated with its worship. The key point is the multidimensionality of the yoginī's powers and their role in the spiritual discipline. From the worldly perspective this entails an extraordinary kind of power and influence over natural and social events. In this way Śrīvidyā is quintessentially Tantric. Tantrics assume that spiritual powers acquired through their extraordinary (and initiated) disciplines will have worldly and visible effects as well as spiritual dimensions. Since these powers (siddhi) may be used for any purpose and are considered an early acquisition in the practice of the discipline another reason for the strong emphasis on secrecy and initiation is evident. For example, the power to influence (sarvavaśaṅkarī) suggests both a physical ability and the spiritual capacity to effect change in oneself and others, while the power to confuse (sarvamohinī) suggests the ability to cast off hindrances such as the ill will of others. But the power (siddhi) itself is considered unregulated except by the will of the adept who has mastered it. Thus it can, in fact, be used for any end. As one

contemporary adept put it:

> Śrīvidyā is committed only to noble spiritual aims but like any form of power can be corrupted. As a spiritual discipline we believe it truly does give what might be called supernormal abilities. These are our responsibility and we must be committed to use them only for good. This is one reason why we are so careful in accepting people to the highest forms of our discipline. But we should keep in mind that these are siddhis acquired at the early stages of practice, they are placed on the outer portions of the cakra. We consider them not the most important aims but only secondary to accomplishing the spiritual goal.[52]

The last point of this remark is especially noteworthy because it reflects an attitude shared by nearly all contemporary adepts in south India. While the acquisition of powers is taken very seriously it is not usually considered a primary aim of spiritual practice. Like all Tantrics, Śrīvidyā adepts do not separate worldly from spiritual accomplishments perhaps because they so strongly identify the conventional world as ultimately identical to Brahman. To know the ultimate truth gives one supreme power over all its manifestations. But in contrast to other Tantrics, Śrīvidyā adepts, at least contemporary ones, have underplayed the importance of power for worldly gain or influence. Another adept stated the attitude succinctly:

> The siddhi is there, we may use it or not. But it is not to be gained for its own sake. It is just part of our practice. The great siddha is one who chooses to use it only when necessary.[53]

The powers associated with the yoginīs of the fourteen

minor triangles have both positive and negative aspects: in other words, positive attributes are used to attract or acquire certain desirable powers and negative (or negatively stated) attributes to protect or to expel undesirable ones. The deities of the fourteen minor triangles are:

Yoginī	**Meaning and Attribute**
1. Sarvasamkṣobhiṇī(śakti)	Power to make everything restless
2. Sarvavidrāviṇī	Power to disperse
3. Sarvākarṣiṇī	Power to attract all
4. Sarvāhlādinī	Power of conferring delight
5. Sarvamohinī	Power of confusing
6. Sarvastaṃbhinī	Power to sustain
7. Sarvajṛṅbhinī	Power to expand
8. Sarvavaśaṅkarī	Power to influence
9. Sarvarañjinī	Power to please
10. Sarvonmādini	Power to intoxicate
11. Sarvārthasādhinī	Power to accomplish all aims
12. Sarvasaṃpatpūrinī	Power to fulfill
13. Sarvamantramayī	Power consisting of all mantras
14. Sarvadvandvakṣayaṅkarī	Power to destroy duality

Following the fourteen triangles are the two sets of lotus petals. The inner eight are the (sub-) cakra which "makes everything restless" (*sarvasamkṣobhakāra*) and has for its presiding deity Tripurasundarī; its *yoginīs* are referred to as "more concealed" (*guptatara*). The outer sixteen lotuses make up the sub-cakra that "fulfills all hopes" (*sarvāśāparipūraka*); its presiding deity is Tripuresi and its *yoginīs* are called "concealed" (*gupta*).

The *yoginīs* of the eight lotus petals display the two-dimensional significance of the *śrīcakra*'s elements perhaps

better than any other sub-cakra; they are both subordinate deities with their own qualities and powers, and spiritual attributes of the adept who worships them. The meanings of the names are physical descriptions of female deities (devīs as they are called) and aesthetic qualities acquired in the course of spiritual discipline.

All eight yoginīs are called ananga, literally, "limbless" and thus the goddesses are the "limbless ones" who, for example, hold "flowers" (anaṅgakūsuma) or "take delight in love" (anangamādanatura). As their name indicates they are incoporeal deities with the capacity to affect events in the material world. As descriptive attributes these names convey a sense of aesthetic beauty that is characteristically Indian, in the more esoteric sense they suggest the kinds of physical powers and abilities associated with feminine deities.

One power, for example, frequently associated in Śrīvidya literature with the mastery of mantra and yantra worship and suggested here by one of the yoginīs is the ability to attract women. Contemporary adepts with traditionally conservative social values express deep reservations about this fact but nonetheless must at least recognize its repeated emphasis in important sources.[54] In explanation they say that kāma, sensual pleasure, as one of the human aims (puruṣārtha) is a legitimate and necessary

aspect of human existence provided it is within the "appropriate" contexts of marriage. These same adepts reject the literal practice of *kāmakalādhyāna*. Other adepts accepting the ritual use of the *pañcamakāras* including sexual intercourse (outside marriage) reject the idea that such ritual sex is a form of *kāma* in the ordinary sense since it is not directed towards mere physical satisfaction.

The translation of the *yoginī*'s names given in the list below focuses on the suggestive sense of the acquired attribute rather than the more obvious sense of the *yoginī*'s description.[55]

Yoginī	**Meaning and Attribute**
1. Anaṅgakusumā(devī)	Of Limitless Fire (or Flowers)
2. Anaṅgamekhalā	Of Limitless Girth
3. Anaṅgamadanā	Of Limitless Delight
4. Anaṅgamadanāturā	Of Limitless Love (Delight in Love)
5. Anaṅgarekhā	Of Limitless Lines (or Measure)
6. Anaṅgaveginī	Of Limitless Energy
7. Anaṅgaṅkuśā	Of Limitless Restraint
8. Anaṅgamālinī	Of Limitless Garlands (or Beauty)

The *yoginīs* of the sixteen lotus petals bear the epithet *ākarṣiṇī* indicating the power of attraction. Like the *yoginīs* of the eight lotuses these deities are considered primarily worldly powers and achievements which, according to a modern adept, "are to be used for facilitating the spiritual path".[56] *Ākarṣiṇī* can also refer to a magnet or any instrument that attracts; in this

case the deities serve this precise function, they are the instruments for attracting various powers and qualities. In addition, they convey a sharpening or heightening of existing physical or mental attributes. The *yoginī*s are also called *nityakalādevī*s, that is, goddesses of the "eternal phases", referring to their identification with the sixteen *kalā*s or phases in the monthly lunar cycle.

The consistency exhibited at the mantric level is an important feature in systematizing the design of ritual discipline. In the case of these *yoginī*s, for example, the *bījākṣaras* are the sixteen Sanskrit vowels, as are the *bīja*s of the *nityadevatā*s placed around the central *trikoṇa* to which they correspond.[57] The *trikoṇa*'s *yoginī*s are the *nityā* deities themselves while here, farther away from the center of the *śrīcakra*, they are the *nityā*'s attributes. At the level of primary phonic emanation the deity and attribute are identical and it becomes evident from their positioning on the *śrīcakra* that the attribute or power associated with the *yoginī*s is naturally subordinate. The *yoginī*s of the sixteen lotus petals provide the best example of the way the *śrīcakra*'s design structures reality through the placement of its deities: the closer to the center, the more basic and less material the aspect of the divinity. A contemporary adept explained a few of these "attractive powers" this way:

> Kāmākarṣiṇī means that whatever is desired will become available. The attractions of the senses have to do with these becoming pleasurable aspects of the adept's experience but can also mean that he has this quality. For example, the gandhākarṣiṇī means that the adept attracts such pleasurable fragrances, that he can smell things others cannot and that he himself always has a pleasant smell. This is not unlike some of the qualities of the Buddha whose body was attractive in all these ways.[58]

At the mantric level Amṛtānanda equates the sixteen and eight lotuses with the sixteen vowels and the consonants. These lotus petals, he says, are the incipient point of the articulation of sound, that is, they are the vaikharī stage of sound.[59]

Below is the complete list of the yoginīs of the sixteen lotus petals (ṣoḍaśadalkamala).

Yoginī	**Meaning and Attribute**
1. Kāmākarṣiṇī	Attracting what is Desired
2. Buddhyakarṣiṇī	Attracting Intelligence
3. Ahaṃkarakarṣiṇī	Attraction of the Ego
4. Śabdākarṣiṇī	Attracion of Sound
5. Sparśākarṣiṇī	Attraction of Touch
6. Rūpākarṣiṇī	Attracting Form
7. Rasākarṣiṇī	Attraction of Taste
8. Gandhākarṣiṇī	Attraction of Smell
9. Cittākarṣiṇī	Attraction of Mind
10. Dhāryākarṣiṇī	Attracting Stability (Courage)
11. Smṛtyākarṣiṇī	Attracting Recollection
12. Nāmākarṣiṇī	Attracting Names
13. Bījākarṣiṇī	Attracting Seed(-syllables)
14. Ātmākarṣiṇī	Attracting the Self
15. Amṛtākarṣiṇī	Attracting Immortality
16. Sarīrākarṣiṇī	Attraction of the Body

Following the sixteen lotuses the dhyānaśloka of the

śrīcakra introduces the term vṛttatraya or three circles. These three circles, usually surrounding the lotus petals, are the subject of much controversy within Srividya tradition, controversy which in historical terms has precipitated an internal sectarian split. The universally accepted interpretation of the three circles is made by Śivānanda in his Subhāgodayavāsanā; here he likens the three circles to the goddess's three eyes which have the form of the moon (soma), the sun (sūrya) and fire (agni).[60] This interpretation is then used by other authors in order to identify these three forms with the three sides of the trikoṇa. According to Amṛtānanda, the three circles have the form of three seeds (bījatraya), that is, they are the three primary reflections of the physical earth (bhūbimba) as it emerges from the three levels of sound, viz., paśyantī, madhyamā and vaikharī.[61]

The major historical commentators do not speak of the three traditions (sampradāyas) that interpret the significance of the circles, though several contemporary ritual manuals (paddhatis) make these formal distinctions upheld in oral traditions.[62] According to oral traditions the three sampradāyas maintain distinctive views; the so-called Hayagrīva sampradāya, named after the avatāra of Viṣṇu involved in the transmission of Śrīvidyā works such as the Lalitāsahasranāma, maintains that the three circles

surrounding the lotuses should not be present; the Ānandabhairava sampradāya, though it figures the circles into the śrīcakra's construction, does not attribute to it any yoginīs and consequently makes no ritual offerings; the Dakṣiṇamūrti sampradāya, which presumably follows a tradition linked to the "south-facing" Śiva in his aspect as guru, maintains the presence of the circles, a list of yoginīs and their attributes. According to the prescriptions of the Dakṣiṇamūrti sampradāya the outermost circle is imagined as white in color, associated with the power of deception (māyā) and identified with the thirty-four yoginīs corresponding to the complete set of consecutive consonants in Sanskrit (according to the fifty-one consonant scheme) placed (in an otherwise unspecified manner) on the outer circle in a counterclockwise direction; the middle circle is red in color, associated with the seed-syllables and identified with the sixteen yoginīs corresponding to the Sanskrit vowels; the third, inner circle is black in color, associated with the material creation (prakṛti) and identified with the sixteen nityadevatās and the corresponding vowels as seed-syllables. The deity is Kāmeśvarī is added to the usual sixteen nityās. This female form of Kāmeśvara is the aspect usually considered the subsuming sixteenth figure in this set of fifteen elements.

Contemporary adepts divide according to these "traditions" even when they were not aware of the oral lore surrounding them. This is the case if only because the three *sampradāyas* cover every possible interpretation. But to those aware of these names and the different meanings attributed to them this is an issue of no small significance. As one adept explains,

> Everything about the *śrīcakra* is purposeful and there is no margin for error. Nothing about its form can be accidental because it is the shape of creation itself. If the *vṛttatraya* is part of the cakra then there must be a reason. According to our [Hayagrīva] *sampradāya* the *vṛttatrāya* should not be there because it has no place in the *pūjā*. We follow the interpretation of Bhāskararāya.[63]

Bhāskararāya argues in the *Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya* that the mention of the three circles refers not to the usual *vṛttatraya* outside the sixteen lotuses but to the three circles that demarcate the two sets of lotuses from the other parts of the *śrīcakra*. He says:

> Thus these three *mandalas* or circles (*vṛttāni*)...cause auspiciousness, that is,...they ornament (*mandayanti*) the Mothers [who are identified on part of the *śrīcakra*). The meaning [of this passage] is that the sricakra that is fit for worship (*kāryākṣama*) should consist of the two sets of lotus petals between which are the three circles...[64]

The alternative, according to Bhāskararāya, is to interpret scripture as referring to the three lines that make up the outer gateways of the *śrīcakra*. This

interpretation accounts for the placement of the term *vṛttatraya* in the *śrīcakra*'s *dhyānaśloka*, that is, between the sixteen petals and the outer gateways. Among historical commentators only Bhāskararāya makes mention of this controversy and offers this interpretation of the *śrīcakra*'s *vṛttatraya* but he does not explicitly state that he belongs to the Dakṣiṇamūrti *sampradāya* nor is there any indication of his being aware of this formal division. He is aware of the *vṛttatraya* interpreted as outer circles but rejects this view and presents his own opinion not merely as a plausible alternative but as the correct interpretation.[65]

Curiously, not all contemporary groups claiming to be part of Bhāskararāya's spiritual legacy are aware of his views since their own *śrīcakras* include the three outside circles. Even more baffling is the presence of the three surrounding circles on the actual *śrīcakra* shown to me in the village of Bhāskararājapuram, the cakra claimed by its owner to have been Bhāskararāya's personal ritual object. Given Bhāskararāya's strong opinion the authenticity of this *śrīcakra* is suspect and can be counted among the many mysteries surrounding his biography.[66] One adept claiming his lineage to be descended from Bhāskararāya stated that while tradition rejects the *vṛttatraya* as having a ritual role it does not necessarily reject the presence of the three circles. In support of this interpretation he cited

the *Nityotsava* of Umānandanātha which includes the three circles outside the sets of lotus petals. Rāmeśvara, however, believes that Bhāskararāya supported a five line theory (the two inner separating circles plus the outer three circles).[67]

But the majority view in south Indian Śrīvidyā supports the Ānandabhairava *sampradāya* which includes the three surrounding circles but prescribes no *pūjā* and offers no textual or historical interpretation of them. Only rarely is the *śrīcakra* actually seen in contemporary India without the surrounding circles. But the lack of a ritual context for the *vṛttatraya* has not gone unnoticed by adepts who view the *śrīcakra* as a perfectly consistent ritual construction. According to one adept:

> The circles are a boundary between the more subtle parts of the cakra and the ordinary world. This is the only purpose they serve, there is no *pūjā* for them.[68]

According to another:

> There must have once been a significance to the circles and a *pūjā* for them. I do not know of one now. And if such a tradition exists I would not follow it because it is not the tradition as taught to me by my own teacher. My teacher did not explain the circles and I am led to believe that they have their own purpose which does not concern our worship.[69]

According to other contemporary adepts identifying themselves with the Dakṣiṇamūrti *sampradāya* the three circles of the *vṛttatraya* are another secret aspect of the

śrīcakra, so secret in fact that the significance has been lost in most lineages. The tradition is not discussed in historical texts, these adepts claim, either because it was not known to the writers or because of its secrecy. It is difficult to determine the origins of this oral tradition of three sampradāyas or when it might have begun. By its absence in the works of such comparatively late figures as Bhāskararāya (who is usually noted for his encyclopedic knowledge) or Lakṣmīdhara (who is quick to point out sectarian differences of opinion) we are led to believe that it is likely a recent explanation. This would undoubtedly be disputed by contemporary Dakṣiṇamūrti sampradāya traditionalists.

The outermost gateways of the śrīcakra are known by several names, none more common than bhūpura or bhūgṛha, literally the "city" or "house of the earth". Composed of three parallel lines the major issue concerning its construction is whether its "doorways" (dvara) are open or closed. Amṛtānanda maintains it can be drawn in both open and closed fashions and Bhāskararāya concurs.[70] Rāmeśvara adds that the bhūpura may be drawn with or without doors which may be composed of one or three lines. Those who follow the tradition of the PKS, he adds, should not use a śrīcakra without the open gateways.[71] Rāmeśvara remarks how

Umānandanātha specifies open gateways and a three line composition for the bhūpura but criticizes him for maintaining the vṛttatraya as three outer circles without an explanation. At this point Rāmeśvara makes the rather astonishing claim that Umānanda may not, in fact, be Bhāskararāya's pupil as tradition suggests because his views are so drastically inconsistent with the Master's.[72] Lakṣmīdhara too accepts the open gateways and maintains that Taittiriya Āraṇyaka, 1.31 supports this view.[73] Perhaps it is because there is no disagreement concerning the yoginīs of the bhūpura that its precise configuration has not led to more important ritual distinctions.

The bhūpura's technical name means the "delusion of the three worlds" (trailokyamohana), its presiding deity is Tripurā and its yoginīs are termed prakaṭa or explicit. Amṛtānanda gives a general interpretation by linking this sub-cakra with the two sets of lotus petals. The three taken together, he says, represent the threefold creation in its explict forms; to understand their collective significance is to reach the first level of spiritual attainment, the pūrvāmnaya.[74]

Vidyānanda in the Artharatnāvali also associates a hierarchy of spiritual levels (āmnaya) with each sub-cakra.[75] He observes that in the discussion of these spiritual levels there is a distinction made between the

Kāmarāja and Lopamudrā traditions. The spiritual levels, he says, are three and mark consecutive stages of realization. For each level there is a group of three sub-cakras; realization is achieved when each group of sub-cakras is ritually worshipped and its meaning internalized. The spiritual levels, like the sub-cakras, follow the dissolution method (samhārakrama) of analysis since they are the result of the ritual worship of the śrīcakra.[76] According to the Kāmarāja tradition, Vidyānanda says, the bhūpura and the two sets of lotus petals form the first group called the pūrvāmnaya or "eastern" (or "upper"); these represent the "dissolution" (samhāra) aspect of divinity, mark the first level of achievement and reflect the most mundane level of reality. The next three sub-cakras, that is, the fourteen triangles and two sets of ten, form the second group and represent the second spiritual level called the dakṣiṇāmnaya or "southern" (or "right") and the "maintenance" aspect (sthiti) of divinity. The third spiritual level, called the paścyāmnaya or the "western" (or "left"), is achieved when the last three sub-cakras are taken as a group, that is, the vasukoṇa of eight triangles, the trikoṇa and the bindu; these represent the "creation" aspect (śṛṣṭi) of divinity. There is, as one would suspect, a fourth level subsuming the three that correspond to the physical śrīcakra; this is called the uttarāmnaya or

"northern" and is presided over by Śiva and Śakti.[77] The Lopamudrā tradition, Vidyānanda maintains, reverses the order and significance of the groupings. Since none of the Lopamudrā hādimata followers take up the issue it is impossible to know if Vidyānanda's sectarian interpretations represent historical tradition. It is significant because it is one of the rare instances of a theoretical distinction between kādi and hādi offering at least superficial evidence of more than simple mantra based differences.

Implicit in the broader interpretation of Vidyānanda, Jayaratha and Lakṣmīdhara is that the bhūpura and two sets of lotus petals are not as seminal to the śrīcakra's meaning as are the sub-cakras composed of triangles.[78] This follows the common general description of the śrīcakra as composed of forty-three triangles without mention of the other portions and conforms to its depiction in certain temple contexts.[79] Others, however, like the author of the Śrīvidyāratnasūtras, maintain that the śrīcakra defines the concept of "cakra" because it is not merely triangles or petals but a combination of triangles and petals.[80]

The yoginīs of the bhūpura number twenty-eight in three groups assigned to specific places on each of its three lines.[81] The first group of ten yoginīs comprises the ten siddhis or spiritual accomplishments, the so-called aṇimādi group.[82] The Śāktas add to the usual Tantric group of eight

siddhis two more: *bhuktisiddhi*, the power of enjoyment, and *sarvakāmasiddhi*, the power over all desires.[83] These extraordinary accomplishments the majority of contemporary adepts consider accretions to the incipient stages of spiritual realization. As one adept explained:

> The *siddhis* are only the first level of achievement and are not actually important. Their importance is only in facilitating other progress. But with these *siddhis* it is easy to see why the teaching is kept so secret. If these are the first level of accomplishment then it is important to see to it that they are acquired by persons who see them in the proper perspective. Like all forms of power they can easily be misused. This is the case with all aspects of Śrīvidyā---its power is part of its very nature as a teaching and should be kept under strict control. For a person with no control over their senses or with the desire to use such *siddhis* for their own gain or others' harm, there is much potential danger. Therefore we keep the teaching secret. So great is the accomplishments at higher level that these *siddhis* are considered the lowest stage of development. The responsibility for giving the teaching only to responsible persons lies with the guru. This is why the guru is like a god. He can determine by his own powers who is truly qualified.[84]

The first set of *prakaṭa yoginīs*, the *siddhis*, are give a role on the *bhūpura* by all except Jayaratha among the major historical commentators.[85] They are:

Yoginī	**Meaning and Attribute**
1. Aṇimāsiddhi	Power to make Minute
2. Laghimāsiddhi	Power to become Light
3. Mahimāsiddhi	Power to become Great (in size)
4. Īśitvasiddhi	Power of Superiority
5. Vaśitvasiddhi	Power to Control
6. Prākāmyasiddhi	Power of Irresistable Will

7. Bhuktisiddhi	Power of Enjoyment
8. Icchāsiddhi	Power to gain one's Desires
9. Prāptisiddhi	Power to Obtain anything
10. Sarvakāmasiddhi	Power over all Desires

Śrīvidyā adepts, unlike other Śāktas and Tantrics, do not give prominence to the role of these siddhis in the acquisition of bodily immortality often associated with siddha traditions. The extraordinary capacities that these powers suggest, however, are not neglected. Virtually the entire second chapter of the NSA is devoted to the performance of Śrīcakra rituals directed towards such things as attracting women, curing illness, imposing one's will on others and even becoming invisible.[86] These extraordinary rites involving the Śrīcakra are associated directly with the acquisition of the ten siddhis. Contemporary adepts, reflecting a more conservative interpretation usually frown on the use of siddhis for worldly purposes. As one put it:

> The siddhis are acquired not to be used for any ordinary purpose. Once acquired after long practice of the complete sādhana they are like a bank account, if you use the power it is to some degree expended; if you simply leave it in the account it draws interest for when you may truly need it.[87]

The siddhis, however, serve another role in Śrīvidyā tradition, namely, to affirm the greatness of particular personalities and to assert the superiority of the tradition over others. Bhāskararāya, for example, is one such figure

attributed supernormal feats. On one occasion it is said that he failed to show respect to a mendicant as he passed the household. This so infuriated the sannyāsi that he wished to condemn Bhāskararāya's actions publicly as disrespectful of the Dharmic roles of householder and renunciate. Bhāskararāya rejoined that the traditional obesience would endanger the sannyāsi's life. This further angered the sannyāsi who then challenged Bhāskararāya to prove his power. Bhāskararāya asked the mendicant to lay before him his begging bowl and staff. As he prostrated before these objects they broke into pieces. The sannyāsi was, of course, suitably humbled. The story goes on, however, to moralize that such behavior towards a mendicant would set a bad example for others and, not wishing to be the cause of a degeneration in Dharma, Bhāskararāya thereafter retired to the inside of his house whenever the mendicant approached.[88] The story exemplifies a key issue in Śrīvidyā's broader interpretation: power is not used unnecessarily or for the sake of spectacle. It is not merely Bhāskararāya's humility that contemporary adepts emphasize but his attitude towards the exercise of power and authority. As one contemporary adept said:

> The siddha never shows what he is capable of doing unless it serves another's purpose. Unless it can be turned towards the welfare of others, he rarely will do anything to draw attention to himself. He is concerned with higher matters. Egoistic displays are not part of his spiritual

make-up.[89]

The "little mothers" (mātṛkās), the yoginīs of the middle line of the bhūpura, differ in number according to sectarian Tantric traditions and texts. In Śrīvidyā they are consistently enumerated as eight: Brahmī, Maheśvarī, Kaumarī, Vaiṣṇavī, Varāhī, Mahedrī (also called Indranī in some sources), Camuṇḍā and Mahālakṣmī. The first seven of the mātṛkās are not disputed in any tradition though their earliest mention, in the Devīmāhātmyā, lists nine by excluding Mahālakṣmī and adding Śivadūtī and Kālī.[90] As minor deities they are found throughout Śākta literature and are frequently aligned with the eight aspects of Bhairava, as is the case in the Jñānārṇava Tantra.[91] The primary function of the mātṛkās is to preside over the eight groups (varga) of letters comprising the Sanskrit alphabet (cf., Svacchanda Tantra, 1.33f.) while the Brahmayāmala (Chapter 2) states that they themselves issue forth from the vowels.[92] Given the numerous and early textual references to the mātṛkās in Śākta speculations it is little wonder they have found a place on the śrīcakra.[93] Jayaratha, though he fails to mention the other two sets of yoginīs usually assigned to the bhūpura, does not omit the mātṛkās. As it has been observed, Śrīvidyā tradition generally exhibits strong tendencies towards inclusion especially with regard to features prominent in Kaula and Kashmiri Śaiva

literatures; the placement of the *mātṛkās* on the *śrīcakra* is one example of this sharing of symbols and concepts.

The ten *yoginīs* of the *bhūpura*'s innermost line are the ten *mudrās* or hand gestures, the first nine of which are common to all the Sakta schools, the tenth being special to Srividya. The significance of *mudrās* has been discussed eloquently elsewhere and remarks here are limited to their importance in Śrīvidyā.[94]

The first nine *mudrās* are identified respectively with the nine sub-cakras (following the *samhārakrama*), the tenth is reserved for Tripura as the supreme deity. According to contemporary ritual manuals (*paddhatis*), the nine *mudrās* are shown either following the naming of the *yoginīs* of each sub-cakra during the *pūjā* or at its conclusion.[95] Certain of the nine *mudrās*, such as *yonimudrā*, are also shown at other points in ritual to effect or "seal" results. The *mudrā* is to the body what the *mantra* is to speech: the subtle expression of transcendence made manifest. The meditative act is complete only when the *mudrā* and *mantra* are in corresponding harmony, the one often considered dependent upon the other to insure efficacy.[96]

In *śrīcakra* worship the *mudrās* are first worshipped collectively as *yoginīs* and then individually as the presiding deities of the sub-cakras and finally as the supreme Tripurā. They represent the powers of these

presiding sub-cakra deities and are considered another form of the deity. In some cases the mudrās resemble the figures the name suggests, for example, the mahāṅkuśa mudrā imitates the elephant goad, a symbol of influence and control, that is part of the iconography of Lalitā, Ganeṣa and other deities; the yoni mudrā represents the female organ while the trikhaṇḍa mudrā, the special mudrā of Tripurā, is so-called because it has three distinctive parts corresponding to the threefold nature of the goddess as she manifests in the conventional world.

It would appear that in the older Śrīvidyā sources, such as VT, the ten mudrās are not given this role as yoginīs of the bhūpura. Bhāskararāya, however, clearly says that despite their omission in VT they should be worshipped here. Oral traditions maintain that any discrepancy regarding the appropriateness of the placement of the mudrās on the bhūpura results from the fact that the three lines create only two spaces. A question arises as to whether the deities are placed on the lines themselves or in the intervening spaces. Those maintaining the latter view accept only two sets of yoginīs and omit the mudrās.

The first nine mudrās are identified with the nine sub-cakras according to the dissolution method from the bhūpura towards the bindu while as ten yoginīs they are placed in precisely the same manner as the ten siddhis. The mudrās

are frequently described in terms of the powers they represent and confer on the adept, thus:

Yoginī	**Meaning and Attribute**
1. Sarvasamkṣobhinī	Power to make everything restless
2. Sarvavidrāvanī	Power to drive anything away
3. Sarvākarṣiṇī	Power to attract anything
4. Sarvavaśaṅkarī	Power to influence or subjugate
5. Sarvonmādini	Power to intoxicate or make passionate
6. Sarvamahāṅkuśā	Power to goad or control anything
7. Sarvakhecarī	Power to fly or bind
8. Sarvabīja	Power over all *bījās*
9. Sarvayoni	Power over the (nine) Yonis or cakras
10. Sarvatrikhaṇḍā	Power over all the various sets of three aspects of reality

With the twenty-eight *yoginīs* of the *bhūpura* the presiding deities of the *śrīcakra*'s major sub-cakras are completed.[97] Each of the sub-cakras can also be considered, from the dissolution method's view, a distinctive *āvaraṇa*, an enclosure or obstacle systematically approached and transcended in the ritual process. Thus the *yoginīs* are also referred to as *āvaraṇadevatas* (deities of the enclosures) and each group is considered the key to achieving the next progressive stage in the ascent of the *śrīcakra*. *Śrīcakra pūjā*, therefore, is frequently called *navāvaraṇapūjā* or the *pūjā* which overcomes the nine obstacles to realization.

Speculative and symbolic interpretations of the *śrīcakra* are intimately related to, if not inseparable from, the ritual practices associated with them. Like all

Tantrics, Śrīvidyā adepts have deliberately brought philosophical and symbolic elements into the practical realm and rarely engage in specualtion for its own sake.

In Śrīvidyā, however, the speculative tendency has led thinkers to fill in the lacuna that seemed most wanting in consistency. Hence where a "fourth" or "sixteenth" subsuming element can be brought into the discussion to complete the symbolism or where a prominent and universally acknowledged Tantric feature can be incorporated into the specific patterns of symbols (such as the *mātṛkās* on the *śrīcakra*) it is given a role. One adept summarized this general propensity saying:

> Though we believe Śrīvidyā is the most ancient teaching of the Vedas and that the *śrīcakra* is the original *yantra* what is even more important to us is that Śrīvidyā lacks nothing. We need not borrow from others since [from our point of view] it is they who have borrowed things from us. Śrīvidyā incorporates all the essential things, we do not care if some call them Tantric or Vedic or whatever. This is the original *vidyā* [i.e., wisdom] so it is natural that whatever is found here is sometimes found elsewhere.[98]

One example of the introduction of a purely theorectical element into the symbolic scheme is the description of the *śrīcakra* according to the preservaton method (*sthitikrama*). As it has been observed, the creation

method (*śṛṣṭikrama*) is the approach favored by Śrīvidyā adepts for theoretical and speculative descriptions of the *śrīcakra*'s origin and interpretation while the dissolution method (*samahārakrama*) is preferred for ritual purposes. The preservation method (*sthitikrama*), however, does not appear to have any theological or practical value other than completing an obvious theological pattern. Hence according to the *sthitikrama* the *śrīcakra* is analyzed from the outermost gates to the eight lotus petals and then from the *bindu* to the fourteen minor triangles. This approach combines and balances, as it were, the other two methods but fails to serve any practical purpose. This sort of theoretical accomodation, however relatively insignificant to Śrīvidyā's theological formulations, nonetheless completes the "natural" link in an otherwise incomplete chain of symbols. Such inclusive theological elements are deliberately devised to enhance Śrīvidyā's consistency and reenforce its entire theological structure.

In summary, the *śrīcakra* provides both the speculative and ritual basis of Śrīvidyā by incorporating common Śākta and Tantric elements into patterns of worship that imitate Vedic ritual. Though it is not chronologically the earliest nor the most common of *yantras* it is among a select few whose ritual dimensions have been scrupulously designed to follow its construction. Its symbolism does not merely

elaborate theoretical concepts but is central to the interpretion of liberation in a system committed to uniting worldly and spiritual goals.

1. YH, 1.9cd-10ab.

2. HTSL, p.58.

3. YH, 1.6 says, "The symbolism of the cakra, similarly the symbolism of the mantra and the pūjā, are the threefold symbols of the divine Tripurā." **cakrasaṅketako mantrapūjāsaṅketakau tathā/ trividhastripurādevyāḥ saṅketaḥ parameśvari//.** See Kaviraj, YH, third edition, p.12.

4. See the brief remarks of T.A. Gopinath Rao on the date of the śrīcakra as an image in: Rao, T.A. Gopinath, Elements of Hindu Iconongraphy. Madras: Govt. Press, 1914, reprinted Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1985, in two volumes, p.22f. See also Part Two regarding the presence of the śrīcakra at Cidambaram.

5. The term maṇḍala is not often used in Hindu Tantrism, as it is among the Buddhists, to indicate a yantra or cakra.

6. It should be noted that the actual drawing of the śrīcakra or its being made into two or three dimensional physcial object is considered a rather mechanical process. This is not to suggest that its construction is not considered an art or that the artisans are not highly skilled. One contemporary adept even maintained that its drawing should be left to those belonging to the viśvakarma caste of carpenters and articans. But like the actual casting of bronze in the West, the casting or drawing of the śrīcakra is not on a par with its original composition. In this case, the śrīcakra is not mere art but the original configuration of the universe, that is, the deity's actual shape as it becomes manifest from its original amorphous being. The numerous descriptions of drawing the śrīcakra following either the sṛṣṭhikrama or the saṃhārakrama, that is, from inside out and vice versa, are primarily for its temporary ritual use. When an adept does not keep a permanent image in which the deity's presence is invoked (either permanently or temporarily) then it is necessary to draw the śrīcakra before its ritual worship. In some of the Samaya schools the actual, physical cakra is altogether dispensed with but this is strictly a minority position. For those drawing the śrīcakra anew each time for ritual purposes there are prescriptions for insuring its purity and other conditions for ritual appropriateness in addition to the actual prescriptions for its composition. There is, as it were, a separate ritual formula for the drawing of the cakra. But this is merely directed towards the worship that is to follow: to draw the śrīcakra is held to be a skill rather than a ritual act, strictly speaking. The cakra's

sacredness lies in its ritual interidentification with the universe and the body.

7. Cf., Lakṣmīdhara on *Saundaryalaharī*, 11 where he quotes *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*, 1.31 as referring to the four outer gateways of the *bhūpura* cakra.

8. Kramrisch, Stella, *The Hindu Temple*. Calcutta: University Press, 1946; reprinted in two volumes, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981; see Vol.I, p.11 of the reprint edition.

9. For example, *maṭha* of the Śaṅkara tradition in Śṛṅgeri is said to be based on the *śrīcakra*; note also in Part Two the discussion of how an ordinary building is ritually converted into a *śrīcakra* for a day for the sake of performing a large *śrīcakra pūjā* in which a large number of women are worshipped as the goddess.

10. See Śivānanda in his *Ṛjuvimarśinī* on *NSA*, 1.43.

11. *KKV*, v.21.

12. *Artharatnāvali* on *NSA*, 1.43.

13. Citation from the *Śrīcakraranadīpikā*, *Śrīvidyāsāparyapaddhati* published by the Śrī Chidānanda Mandali, Madras, 1984. Frontispiece. The text reads: **bindutrikoṇavasukoṇadaśarayugma manvaśranagadalasanyutaṣoḍaśaraṃ/ vṛttatrayam ca dhāraṇisadānatrayaṃ ca śrīcakraṃ etaduditaṃ parādevatāyaḥ//**

14. Occasionally the term *baindava cakra* refers to the *bindu*, central *trikoṇa* and the eight triangles of the *vasukoṇa*. Cf., Bhāskararāya's usage in his *bhāṣya* on *Tripurā Upaniṣad*, Verse Three.

15. See Shankaranarayanan, S., *Śrīcakra*. Madras: Dipti Publications, 1970, third edition, 1981, p.44 for this quotation of the text. Printed editions do not seem to include the verse.

16. Cf., *Śrīcakra*, p.44 as cited above.

17. *YH*, 1.7.

18. See *Śrīcakra*, p.45, ftn.2, no citation is given as to the original source. The text reads: **tvagśṛṅmamsamedo'sthidhatavaḥ śaktimūlakaḥ/ majjaśuklaprāṇajīvadhavaḥ śivamūlakaḥ//**

19. *Subhagodayavāsanā*, v.9.

20. *Setubandha*, on *YH*, 1.10.

21. Śāktas accept *pariṇāmavāda*, according to Bhāskararāya, the doctrine that creation is a process of genuine transformation. They do not hold that the universe only appears to change but remains uncreated (*ajātivāda*) or that the transformation is mere illusion based on false perception (*vivartavāda*). In this way they differ significantly in their non-dualistic (*advaita*) philosophy from Śaṅkara and the Śāṅkara schools which maintain various forms of *ajāti-* and *vivartavādas*.

The image of the spider and its web is commonly used in Śākta theology as an example drawn from the Upaniṣadic explanation. Cf., *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*,

22. Cf., *SL*, v.1.

23. *KKV*, v.22.

24. "Agastya" of "Ānanda" Mandali, January, 1985.

25. *KKV*, vs.37-38.

26. *YHdīpikā*, 1.10 and 1.14.

27. *Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya*, v.2.

28. Cf., *Setubandha* on *YH*, 1.10 where Bhāskararāya remarks that the *bindu* is Brahman which manifests as the central *trikoṇa*. This, he says, is not merely his own opinion but is upheld by earlier commentators.

29. Bhāskararāya says in the *Setubandha*, on *YH* 1.14: **akāra parmaśivaḥ tasya śrī ī puṇyogalakṣane nip tayoḥ samyogene ekāranispattiḥ//**

30. Bhāskararāya glosses the term *vaikharī* as, *vi* meaning much and *khara*, hard, that is, speech in its physical form. Cf., *Saubhāgyabhāskara* on *LSN*, n.371. Sastry, p.190.

31. *Saubhāgyabhāskara* on *LSN*, n.56. Sastry, p.60. Bhāskararāya passes over the mention of only twenty-five *tattvas* or categories of reality (the number in the Yoga system), as mentioned in the quotation here from *Rudrayāmala* (?). Śāktism accepts thirty-six *tattvas*, a point that is without controversy along sectarian lines. In the *Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya*, v.1, Bhāskararāya clearly states, "...the

mātṛkā letters...number only forty-eight."

32. Cf., *YH*, 1. 79-85 which lists all the names for the nine sub-cakras.

33. *YH*, 1. 79-85ff.

34. *Saubhāgyabhāskara* on *LSN*, n.73. Sastry, p.76.

35. *Saubhāgyabhāskara* on *LSN*, n.256. Sastry, p.138.

36. *Saubhāgyabhāskara* on *LSN*, n.391 which reads **nityāṣoḍaśīkarūpa**, that is, in "the form of the sixteen *nityās*". Cf., Sastry, p.195. The sixteen *nityās* are the main subject of speculation and worship in the *Tantrarāja Tantra* and continue to play a prominent role in Śrīvidyā worship. Their names, here taken as deities of the *Śrīcakra*, are well-known to all Śāktas: Kāmeśvari, Bhagamālinī, Nityāklinnā, Bherundā, Vahnivāsinī, Mahāvajreśvarī, Śivaduti, Tvaritā, Kulasundarī, Nityā, Nilapātakinī, Vijayā, Sarvamaṅgalā, Jvālamālinī, Citrā and (Mahā) Tripurasundarī.

37. There is some dispute among Śrīvidyā adepts as the to actual number of consonants in the Sanskrit alphabet. Bhāskararāya outlines the problem in the *Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya* where he takes the less popular view that the consonants number only forty-eight rather than fifty-two. See his remarks on Verse 1.

38. *Saubhāgyabhāskara* on *LSN*, n.577 which reads **mātṛkāvarnarūpinī**, that is, "of the form of the *mātṛkā* letters." Cf., Sastry, pp.239-240. Bhāskararāya seems untroubled by his own inconsistency as to precisely how many *mātṛkās* make up the Sanskrit alphabet. Here in his early work he appears to accept fifty-one while in the later *Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya* he argues for forty-eight by excluding *kṣa* and *jña* as compounds and the Vedic retroflex ḷ as identical to *l*.

39. As noted by Bhāskararāya in the *Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya*, Verse Two where he says, "...the nine *Yonis* whose nature are the latent mental impressions (*saṃskāratātmanā*); some of these [latent impressions] already exist, others are still potential. These are calledj [in Verse Two] the nine cakras (*navacakrāni*) or the agents [of creation]..."

40. *Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya*, v.2.

41. *Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya*, Verse One.

42. Note here that Dirk Jan Hoens remark that the third sub-cakra is the *sarvarakṣākāra* is incorrect. He has interchanged the name of this sub-cakra with the following sub-cakra of ten triangles. See *HT*, pp.114-115.

43. A member of "Gāyatrī" Mandali, Madurai, December, 1984.

44. *Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya*, v.2.

45. *YH*, 1.79-85.

46. *Tripuropaniṣadbhāṣya*, v.3. The quotation resembles *Yoginīhrdaya*, 1.16 but is not identical.

47. This series of identificaitons of *yoginīs* and Sanskrit sounds does not correspond to the identification made in the Śrīvidyā ritual manuals at the point of this sub-cakra in the *śrīcakra puja*. In the ritual handbooks the outer set of ten triangles begins at the retroflex *ṇa* and finishes at the aspirated *bha*; the inner set begins at the next consonant in the usual order, that is, *ma* and finishes at *kṣa* which follows the ordinarily last letter of Sanskrit, *ha*.

48. *YHdīpikā* on 1.73-78.

49. See *HT*, p.115.

50. *Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya*, v.3.

51. The senses of action, the *karmendriyas*, are the physical organs; the senses of knowledge, *jñānendriyas*, are the corresponding faculties. The four aspects of the mind are subsumed under the general term, *antaḥkāraṇa*, and refer to it plus the distinctive qualities of the *mānas* or mind, the *buddhi* or capacity of judgement and the *citta* or intellectual ability.

52. A member of "Gāyatrī" Mandali, Madras, January, 1985.

53. A member of the "Gāyatrī" Mandali, Madurai, January, 1985.

54. Cf., *NSA*, Chapter Two which describes the supernatural powers associated with the worship of the *śrīcakra*.

55. The translation of the *yoginī*'s names follows the oral interpretation of their meanings by contemporary south Indian Śrīvidyā adepts. It is, as it were, a composite of these interpretations which concentrated on the acquisition

of such abilities.

56. "Nārada" of "Ānanda" Mandali, Madras, January, 1985.

57. In addition to the *pūjāpaddhatis* this is affirmed in the *KKV*, v.33. Textual references to the *nityādevatas* abound in Śākta Tantric literature, cf., *Śaktisamgama Tantra*, 3.12.36ff.; *NSA*, 1.25ff.; and, of course, the most extensive treatment in *Tantrarāja Tantra*, Chapter 3ff.

58. "Naṭarāja" of "Guru" Mandali, Madurai, November, 1984.

59. *Saubhāgyasudhodaya*, 3.8.

60. *Subhāgodayavasana*, v.11.

61. *Saubhāgyasudhodaya*, 3.9.

62. One such published *paddhati*, now long out of print, attests to this oral tradition. Cf., *Śrīviydāratnākaraḥ of Swamishriharīharanandasaraswati (Shrīkarapatraswamī) Maharaj*, edited by Shrisitaramkaviraj, Bhaktisudha Sahitya Parishad: Calcutta, 1951.

63. "Purohita" of "Siddha" Mandali, Madras, December, 1984.

64. *Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya*, v.4.

65. Bhāskararāya argues this point not only in the *Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya* but in the *Setubandha* on *YH*, 1.52-56.

66. For a more complete discussion of these points see the Introduction to Part Three of this study.

67. Rāmeśvara on *PKS*, 3.9. Rāmeśvara's strong criticisms of Umānandanātha are also discussed in the historical remarks in Part One, in Part Two in the discussion of the living traditions that claim Bhāskararāya's spiritual legacy and in the introductory remarks to Part Three.

68. "Jyotiṣa" of "Samaya" Mandali, Madras, January, 1985.

69. "Naṭarāja" of "Guru" Mandali, Madurai, November, 1984.

70. *YH*, 1.24.

71. Rāmeśavara on *PKS*, 3.9.

72. See Rāmeś vara on *PKS*, 3.9f.

73. On SL, v.11ff.

74. Saubhāgyasudhodaya, 3.10.

75. Artharatnāvalī on the Nityaṣoḍaśīkārṇava, 1.32ff.

76. Ritual worship proceeds, as we have noted, according to the saṃhārakrama from the outermost sub-cakras towards the center thus the lowest level of spiritual achievement corresponds to the outermost portions of the śrīcakra.

77. The āmnayas names are technical though their literal sense as directions can be taken to reflect their placement on the central trikoṇa. The fourth level, Amṛtānanda says in Saubhāgyasudhodaya, 3.13, encompasses the whole śrīcakra and its branches, which he calls here the "great cakra" (mahācakra).

78. See NSA, 1.46-58 with the respective commentaries of Vidyānanda and Jayaratha and Lakṣmīdhara on SL, v.11ff.

79. The general description of the śrīcakra as composed of forty-three trianges is maintained in the Tripurā Upaniṣad, Verse Four, cf., Rāmānanda's remarks are Verse Three. Note also that at the Cidambaram Naṭarāja temple in south India the śrīcakra cut in relief on a wall nearby the sub-shrine of the goddess Śivakāmasundarī appears only as the sets of interlacing triangles, omitting the other portions. This relief is recent but is apparently based on an old painting.

80. Śrīvidyāratnasūtra, v.4f.

81. For the placement of the prakaṭa yoginīs see the diagram in Appendix Two.

82. The placement of the yoginīs is taken up in NSA, I.153f.

83. Cf., the list given under aṇima in Apte, S.V., The Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary. Poona: Prasad Prakashan, 1957; reprinted, Kyoto: Rinsen Book Company, 1978, p.37.

84. "Naṭarāja" of "Guru" Mandali, Madurai, October, 1984.

85. Discussion of the siddhis and their placement on the śrīcakra is seen at NSA, 1.153cd. Jayaratha fails to mention the siddhis and, in fact, only finds a place for the eight mātṛkās.

86. Cf., *NSA*, 2.8ff, and 2.32.

87. "Naṭarāja" of "Guru" Mandali, Madurai, December, 1984. Several other adepts from other Mandalis made nearly identical comments.

88. This story is repeated time and again among living adepts. Its textual source I only later discovered was the Introduction to the *VVR* by Pandit S. Subrahmanya Sastri.

89. "Agastya" of "Gāyatrī" Mandali, Madras, January, 1985.

90. Cf., *HT*, p.65.

91. *HT*, p.65. The eight Bhairavas are: Asitaṅga, Ruru, Caṇda, Krodha, Unmatta, Kapālin, Bhiṣaṇa and Samhārin. The *bījākṣaras* of the two sets correspond indicating their close relationship at the subtle mantric level. These *bījas* are the long vowels, the dipthongs and the *visarga*.

92. *HT*, p.65f; also *HTSL*, p.42.

93. For the placement of the *mātrkās* and the other *bhūpura yoginīs* see the diagram in Appendix Two.

94. On the interpretation and meaning of *mudrās* see Gonda, Jan, *Mudrā*, in *Ex orbe religionum*, Studia G. Widengren, II, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1972. Also *HT*, p.115f.

95. The tradition of showing the *mudrās* at the conclusion of the *pūjā* is maintained in a few ritual texts belonging to disinct *parmaparas* though among those that use sources prescribing the showing of the *mudrās* after each set of *yoginīs* some allowances are made. In one case, for example, showing the *mudrās* is held back despite the textual prescription mandating their being shown after each sub-cakra. In this case the adept explained, "The mudrās belong to each of the [sub-] cakras but can shown at the end of the *pūjā*. This is alteration can be prescribed at the discretion of the guru. The point is not to lose concentration in the course of the ritual. When the *pūjā* is completely internalized we make no movements or utter mantras or sounds aloud. Everything is turned over to the internal meditation thus only after emerging from meditation do we complete the ritual necessities such as showing the *mudrās*." ("Naṭarāja" of "Guru" Mandali, Madurai, December, 1984.)

96. *HT*, p.116.

97. There are, in fact, other deities placed on the *śrīcakra* during its ritual worship such as on the so-called *gurumaṇḍala* and in the *āyudhāpūjā* or worship of the goddess's weapons.

98. "Agastya" of "Gāyatrī" Mandali, Madras, January, 1985.